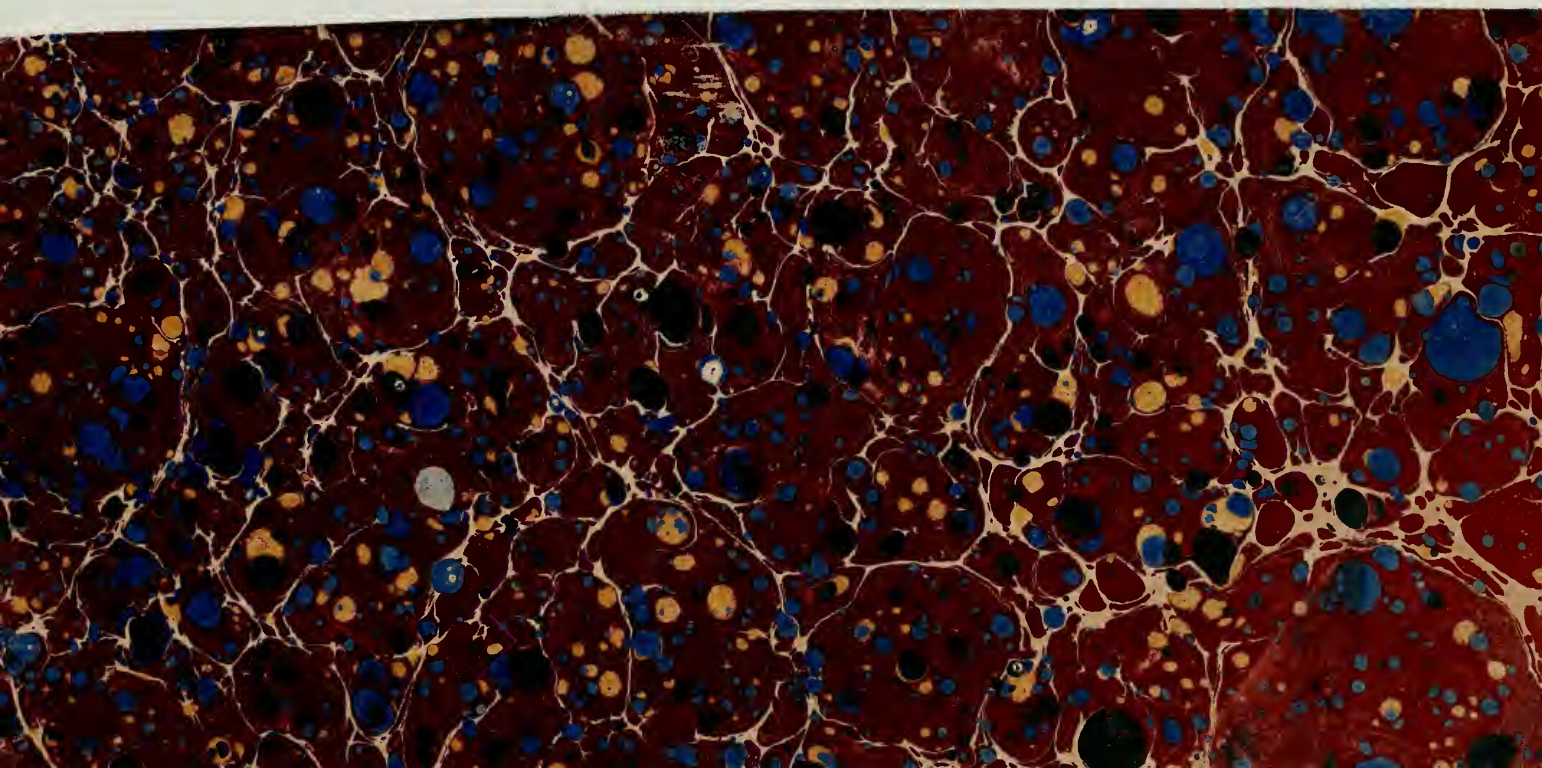
ornia
al

Edmund J. Burke



Edmund J. Burke
Dec. 25th 1910

MEMOIR

OF

JOHN AIKIN, M.D.

BY LUCY AIKIN.

WITH

A SELECTION OF HIS

MISCELLANEOUS PIECES,

BIOGRAPHICAL, MORAL, AND CRITICAL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR BALDWIN, CRADOCK, AND JOY.

1823.

BLH

PRINTED BY RICHARD TAYLOR,
SHOE LANE, LONDON.

CONTENTS OF VOLUME II.

CRITICAL ESSAYS ON ENGLISH POETS.

	Page.
Account of the Life and Works of Spenser	3
An Essay on the Poetry of Milton	31
An Essay on the Heroic Poem of Gondibert	69
Critical Remarks on Dryden's Fables	103
Observations on Pope's Essay on Man	131
An Essay on the Plan and Character of Thomson's Seasons	151
A Comparison between Thomson and Cowper as Descriptive Poets	180
Essay on Dr. Armstrong's Art of Preserving Health	199
Essay on the Poems of Green	223
A Critical Essay on Somerville's Poem of The Chace	241
An Essay on the Poetry of Goldsmith	257

MISCELLANEOUS PIECES.

Aphorisms on Mind and Manners	277
What Man is made for	280
On the Touch for the King's Evil	284
Literary Prophecies for 1797	290
Remarks on the Charge of Jacobinism	294
On the Probability of a future Melioration in the State of Mankind	297
On Toleration in Russia	317

	Page.
Military Piety	323
Inquiry into the Nature of Family Pride	326
Apology for the Demolition of Ruins	341
Inquiry into the essential Character of Man	348
Thoughts on the Formation of Character	362
On Self-Biographers	388
On the Attachment to Mary Queen of Scots	399
On the Imitative Principle	404
Historical Relations of Poisonings	412
A Word for Philosophy	427
On Cant	443
On Mottoes	455

CRITICAL ESSAYS

ON

ENGLISH POETS.

ACCOUNT

OF

THE LIFE AND WORKS

OF

SPENSER.

THE early efforts in poetry of all nations are necessarily rude and imperfect. Many attempts must be made, before a barbarous language can be so disciplined into correctness of diction, and melody of sound, as to afford a material which even genius itself can work into any thing truly excellent. And when improvement has proceeded so far that lines and passages are to be found deserving of real admiration, these will long be of rare occurrence, like specks of gold in a matrix of brute earth. Productions of such a period, however interesting they may be to the critical inquirer into the history of national literature, will give more disgust than pleasure to one who reads for amusement only, and who has already formed his taste upon the best models of different ages and countries.

It might be difficult to determine with which of the English poets commences that degree of masterly execution which is capable of satisfying a cultivated taste; but that SPENSER is within this limit, will hardly be questioned by any one who has sufficiently familiarised himself with his writings to disregard the uncouthness of an antiquated diction. His name, too, by long possession, has obtained a permanent rank among the major poets of the nation; so that the student of English verse cannot, even through regard to his reputation, safely remain unacquainted with the works of one who fills such a space in the history of his art. As the undoubted head of a peculiar class of writers, Spenser, too, claims the notice of literary curiosity; for no adequate idea can be formed of the extent to which personification and allegory may be carried, without a perusal of the *Faery Queene*. On all these accounts, it is presumed that the admission of Spenser's works into a collection of the principal English Poets will appear much less extraordinary, than the former rejection of them [a].

Few of the eminent English writers are less known by authentic biographical records than Spenser; and it is necessary to be contented

[a] This article was written for a new edition of Johnson's Poets.

with such a defective and partly dubious account of him as can be derived from a few traditionary notices, and from circumstances incidentally alluded to in his works.

Edmund Spenser was born in London, probably of obscure parentage, since he has given us no information on that point, though he has taken care to record that he derives his *name* from "an house of ancient fame," meaning the noble family of Spensers of Althorp. It does not appear, however, that he ever claimed kindred with that house, or was acknowledged by it. He was entered as a sizer (the lowest order of students) at Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, in the year 1569. From this date may with probability be inferred that of his birth, which has been strangely misrepresented in the inscription on his tomb. Supposing him, when he entered at the university, to have been sixteen, the usual academical age at that period, he must have been born about the year 1553. He took the degrees of Bachelor and Master of Arts, the latter in 1576, in which year he was an unsuccessful competitor for a fellowship. Mortification for this disappointment probably drove him from college; and we find that he took up his residence for some time in the North, but in what quality we do not learn. Here, an incident of

importance in a poet's life occurred, that of his falling in love. His mistress, whom he has commemorated under the name of Rosalinde, after leading him through the usual vicissitudes of a love-adventure, finally deserted him. Nothing could be more natural, than that such a circumstance should, in a mind addicted to the Muses, produce pastoral poetry; accordingly, he wrote his "Shepherd's Calendar," a part of which is devoted to amorous complaint, and of which the general strain is serious and pensive. This he published in 1579, dedicated, under the humble signature of *Immerito*, to Mr., afterwards Sir Philip, Sidney. To the acquaintance of this celebrated person he was introduced by a friend named Gabriel Harvey; and as this was previously to his publication of the Shepherd's Calendar, part of which he even composed at Penshurst, it seems fully to refute a romantic tale concerning his first introduction to Sidney. This story relates, that Spenser one morning repaired to Leicester-house, an entire stranger, and provided with no other recommendation than the ninth canto of the first book of the "Faery Queene," in which is contained the fine allegory of Despair. Having obtained admission to Sidney, and presented his paper, that lover and judge of poetry was so struck with a particular stanza,

that he immediately ordered fifty pounds to be given to the author; and proceeding to the next stanza, he raised his gift to a hundred pounds; which sum he doubled on reading a third, and commanded his steward to pay instantly, lest he should be induced by a further delay to give away his whole estate. Sir Philip was a character of uncommon and romantic generosity; but such a rate of estimating verse was not at all conformable to the spirit of the times. Indeed, the story would scarcely suit any patron upon record but a Roman emperor or a Saracen caliph. It is not to be doubted, however, that Sidney was a warm and liberal friend to Spenser. He caused him to quit his rural retreat, and try his fortune at court; and by his means Spenser was made known to the Earl of Leicester, and finally to Queen Elizabeth. The bounty of his sovereign lady (who probably received more learned adoration, and at a cheaper rate, than any crowned head besides) is more credible in its measure than that ascribed to Sidney. She is said, upon his presenting some poems to her, to have ordered him a gratuity of a hundred pounds; which sum appeared so extravagant a reward for a *rhymer*, to the Lord-treasurer Burleigh, that he deferred the payment, till he received a repetition of the order from his mistress, not without some chid-

ing for the delay. Either this circumstance, or Spenser's attachment to persons disliked by the treasurer, rendered this potent minister a lasting enemy to the poor poet, who in several parts of his works alludes to this misfortune, which he is thought imprudently to have aggravated by some satirical innuendos. The Earl of Leicester's friendship, however, produced some valuable fruits. In 1579 he sent Spenser upon some commission to France; and it was probably through this nobleman's recommendation, that he was appointed secretary to Arthur lord Grey of Wilton, when he went as lord-deputy to Ireland, in 1580. In this situation Spenser displayed those talents for business which many examples show to be very compatible with a genius for elegant literature. He wrote a "Discourse on the State of Ireland," containing many judicious observations on the schemes of policy proper for that country. His services to the crown were rewarded with a grant of 3028 acres in the county of Cork, out of the vast forfeited property of the Earl of Desmond:—an ample possession, upon an insecure tenure; like all those which different rebellions have conveyed from Irish to English proprietors, and which have been usually bestowed with a profuseness proportional to the celerity with which they were acquired. Spen-

ser's residence was the castle of Kilcolman near Doneraile, one of the Earl of Desmond's seats. Here he describes himself, in the style of pastoral poetry, as keeping his sheep "under the foot of Mole, that mountain hore," and frequenting "the coolly shade of the green alders by the Mulla's shore;"—names which have in some measure been rendered classical by his Muse. It was here that he first received a visit from that splendid character, Sir Walter Raleigh, then a captain under Lord Grey. In his pastoral fiction, Spenser gives Raleigh the title of the *Shepherd of the Ocean*, and highly extols his courtesy and elegant accomplishments. Raleigh proved his friendship by some court services which he rendered the poet; indeed Spenser says, that he "first enhanced to him the grace of his queen." Perhaps he was instrumental in procuring from the crown a confirmation of Spenser's grant of land, which he obtained in 1586. They went together to England, where it seems that our poet wished to obtain a settlement, rather than to continue in a country which, whatever might be its rural charms, was little better than barbarous in point of society and civilization. It might be during his attendance on the court in this visit, that he was made fully sensible of the chagrins and mortifications which he has so forcibly described

in the following lines of his "Mother Hubbard's Tale:"

> Full little knowest thou that hast not try'd,
> What hell it is in suing long to byde;
> To lose good days that might be better spent,
> To waste long nights in pensive discontent;
> To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow,
> To feed on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow;
> To have thy prince's grace, yet want her peers',
> To have thy asking, yet wait many years;
> To fret thy soul with crosses and with cares,
> To eat thy heart with comfortless despairs;
> To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to run,
> To spend, to give, to want, to be undone.

Spenser returned to Ireland; and if the leisure of an involuntary retreat was the cause of his writing the Faery Queene, we must rejoice at the disappointment of his wishes, which detached him from the obscure group of placemen and courtiers. Of that poem, it appears, from the author's letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, that the whole plan was formed, and three books were written, in the beginning of 1589. These were published, with a dedication to Queen Elizabeth, in 1590; and it can scarcely be doubted, that in a learned and poetical age they would excite much notice and admiration. The author, indeed, did not leave them solely to their own merits; for he introduced them with complimentary son-

nets to several persons of quality, among whom he did not think it prudent to omit Lord Burleigh. Yet in his address to that minister, he shews how little he could depend upon him as a friend to poetry—to his "idle rhymes, the labour of lost time, and wit unstay'd;" and he only humbly presumes that their "deeper sense" may obtain his approbation. The Queen rewarded him for his poetry and compliments by a pension of 50*l.* per annum, granted in February 1591, and he may thenceforth be considered as her *laureate*, though the title was not formally given him.

It was not till his fortieth year that he repaired the loss of his Rosalinde, by a marriage with "a country lass of low degree," but who had a stock of charms sufficient to inspire the happy lover with matter for a very poetical and rapturous epithalamium. It is to be supposed, that with such a partner his life passed more agreeably in his rural banishment, and that he ceased to regret that court, the disquiets of which he had so acutely felt. In 1596 he published a new edition of the Faery Queene, with the addition of three more books, which only half completed his design. If the traditionary story be true, that the remaining six books were lost by a servant who had the charge of bringing them over to England, the event may be reckoned among the most afflictive

that could happen to a poet, and would probably be felt by him as severely as his subsequent misfortune of the plunder of his house, and the destruction of his whole property, in the rebellion of Tyrone. He himself was driven for refuge to England, where he soon after died, in 1598, probably a victim to grief and despondence. He was interred in Westminster-abbey, near the remains of his poetical father, Chaucer, and at the charge of the noble-minded, though imprudent and unfortunate, Earl of Essex. Several of his brother poets attended his obsequies, and threw into his grave copies of verses to his honor. Nothing is known of his family or posterity, further than that one of his descendants came over from Ireland in King William's reign, as a claimant of his estate.

Of the manners, conversation, and private character of Spenser, we have no information from contemporaries; our conclusions must therefore be only drawn from his writings, and the few known events of his life. To the intimate friend of Sidney and Raleigh, especially of the former, it is reasonable to attribute virtue as well as genius. His works breathe a fervent spirit of piety and morality; and it would be difficult to conceive of any thing base or dissolute in conduct, in conjunction with the dignity of sentiment

which is uniformly supported in the productions of his Muse. A querulous disposition, however, occasionally breaks forth; nor does he seem to have been contented under a fortune more affluent than usually falls to the lot of a poet. He paid considerable court to the great, but without that extravagance of adulation which was not uncommon even among the eminent persons of that age. He possessed friends as well as patrons, and his death was lamented as a public loss to the literature of his country.

We are now to speak of Spenser in his poetical capacity. Fraught with the stores of ancient learning and of the school-philosophy of his time, and conversant with the poets of Italy, and the tales of popular romance, he came fully prepared for the execution of any plan of poetical invention which his genius, modelled by the taste of the age, might suggest; and he found his native language sufficiently cultivated to serve as a vehicle of poetical conceptions of any class. The revival of letters had not as yet produced in Europe the revival of that pure and natural taste which distinguished the best periods of Greece and Rome. A passion for marvellous adventure, carried to the limits of the absurd and burlesque, and a disposition to veil truth under the disguise of allegory, characterised the writers who were

the favorites of the day. Spenser did not possess that rare elevation of genius which places a man above the level of the age; but he had the richness of invention, and the warmth of feeling, which present the manner of the age in its happiest form. His first performance, however, did not indicate a marked superiority over the contemporary poets of his country.

The SHEPHERD'S CALENDAR is a series of Pastorals, formed upon no uniform plan, but in general lowered down to that rustic standard which is supposed appropriate to this species of composition. The gradation of rural scenery according to the changes of the year, which the title of the piece would lead the reader to expect, forms but a small, and by no means a striking part of the design, which is rather moral than descriptive. The shepherd's character is borrowed chiefly for the purpose of giving grave lectures on the conduct of life; of panegyrising a sovereign, or lamenting a lost friend: it is even made the allegorical vehicle of reflections concerning the state of religion. Spenser, at this period, seems to have joined that party which was most zealous for ecclesiastical reform, and which viewed with the greatest displeasure the corruptions introduced by the worldly pomp and dominion of popery. How adverse such topics are to the simplicity and

amenity of genuine pastoral, needs not now be pointed out. It seems generally agreed, that the description of the grand and beautiful objects of nature, with well-selected scenes of rural life, real, but not coarse, constitute the only proper materials of pastoral poetry. To these, Spenser has made small additions; and, therefore, the Shepherd's Calendar, though it obtained the applause of Sidney, and seems immediately to have given its author a rank among the esteemed poets of the time, would probably, in the progression of critical taste, have been consigned to oblivion, had it not been borne up by the fame of the Faery Queene. It is not, however, void of passages marked with the writer's peculiar strength and liveliness of painting. The description of the aged oak, in the moral fable of February, may be pointed out as an instance of this kind; as well as the whole fable of the kid and wolf, under May. The rustic and antiquated language of the greater part of these pieces was, doubtless, intended to correspond with the character annexed to pastoral poetry; but its simplicity is often carried to rudeness and vulgarity. The alliteration, which is also meant as a character of antiquity, will scarcely please a modern ear.

The FAERY QUEENE, the inseparable companion of Spenser's fame, is one of the most singular

poems extant in any language; and, from the unfinished state in which we possess it, we should probably have found it impossible to form a clear conception of the author's plan in writing it, had he not, in a letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, prefixed to the publication of the first three books, given its general argument. We there learn, that his leading purpose—a truly noble one—was to train a person of rank in "vertuous and gentle discipline," by exhibiting a perfect example of the twelve private moral virtues, as they are enumerated by Aristotle. This is done in "a continued allegory or dark conceit," rendered more dark than the usual obscurity of allegorical fiction by an extraordinary involution of the plot. The general hero, or image of perfect excellence, is the British prince Arthur, so renowned in legendary history; yet each several book has its particular hero, whose adventures allegorically display the exercise of that virtue which is the proper subject of the book. In order, therefore, to preserve the unity of the whole, Prince Arthur is occasionally introduced as an auxiliary of these allegorical knights in their most dangerous adventures. The quality peculiarly attributed to him is Magnificence, which, in modern language, would perhaps rather be termed Magnanimity, or Greatness of Soul, as being the sum and perfection

of all the other virtues. He is enamoured in a vision with the beauty of the *Faery Queene*, and comes to seek her in Faery Land; and this is the grand fable of the piece. But while the Faery Queene represents Glory in the general intention, she is also, in the particular meaning, a type of Queen Elizabeth, whose dominion is the Faery land. Arthur, then, wooes Glory in his proper person; and the *time* of the fable is represented to be that of the real commencement of his history, part of which is here copied from Geoffrey of Monmouth. But Queen Elizabeth, or Gloriana, is likewise identified by circumstances in her real history; and the great persons in her court are frequently alluded to in the characters of the fairy or allegorical knights. And, as if all this confusion were not sufficient to perplex the reader, Spenser had thought proper to reserve till the twelfth or last book, the development of the occasion which puts all his knights in motion; and which, it seems, was to be an annual feast kept by the Faery Queene for twelve days; on each of which, in conformity to the manners of chivalry, some distressed damsel, orphan, or other sufferer under injustice and oppression, appears as a suitor for aid, and receives from the queen a champion. The reason given by the poet for delaying this piece of information is, that he might imitate his

epic predecessors, in breaking at once into the action, without the formality of a historical introduction. But to suffer the whole action to elapse, before the reader is made properly acquainted with the actors, and the cause in which they are engaged, is surely a violent sacrifice to a principle, the justness of which, even in a much more sober application, may be questioned. On commencing the Faery Queene, it is now impossible, without consulting the author's prefatory epistle, to conceive that it is to have any other subject than the adventures of the Red-cross knight; or to form any notion concerning the title of the poem, and the connection this imaginary *Queen* is to have with its persons and events.

From this view of the plan of Spenser's great poem, it will probably appear that its merit consists rather in affording a boundless field for the range of fancy, than in that concentration of the interest upon some one important point, which is the essential character of the genuine epic. Were each book, indeed, to be regarded as a separate and complete piece, having its own distinct hero, this effect might be said to be in some measure produced; but such was not the author's intention, since he avowedly aims at connecting the whole by means of his general hero, Prince Arthur. But this personage, who seldom appears

but as a subordinate and auxiliary character, and in some of the books absolutely performs nothing, can only in the theory of the poem be regarded as serving this purpose; in the practice, he is found to excite little either of curiosity or interest. Relinquishing, therefore, any further consideration of plan and design, we shall proceed to consider Spenser's character as an allegorical painter, in the detached figures and groups which strike the eye in ranging through his gallery of pictures. In fact, detached beauties are what the mind principally dwells upon even in the most regular compositions; and, after the first perusal, Orlando Furioso and the Eneid are alike recurred to for their fine passages alone.

The groundwork of all Spenser's fictions is the system of chivalry, as displayed in the romances of the time, and in the principal productions of Italian poetry. Knights wandering in search of adventures, distressed ladies, giants, Saracens, savages, dragons, enchantments, forests, and castles, were the materials with which these creations of the fancy were fabricated. Some of them professed to be histories, or real narrations; but in many, "more was meant than met the ear," and moral or metaphysical ideas were darkly presented under the garb of visible beings. So meritorious was thought this alliance of a secret

meaning with an obvious one, that Tasso, after he had formed a noble epic poem on the basis of true history, and indeed with an uncommon attention to reality in manners and characters, thought it advisable to add a key to the whole, by which it was turned into a theological allegory. Fortunately, this appears to have been a mere after-thought which had no influence upon the plan and conduct of the poem. Ariosto, on the other hand, who is generally a simple narrator of adventures, given as real, however extravagant, occasionally intermixed fictions of pure allegory. But Spenser is throughout allegorical in his design, except as far as he meant to interweave the legendary tales of ancient British history, on account of their connection with his human hero, Prince Arthur. All his other heroes are Virtues personified by knights-errant; and this uniformity of fiction would have produced a tiresome sameness in the action, had not the poet possessed that uncommon fertility of invention, and force of description, which are his characteristics. In all the records of poetry, no author can probably be found who approaches him in the facility with which he embodies abstract ideas, and converts them into actors in his fable. It is true, he found in the extensive regions of romance a vast variety of forms ready to assume the moral characters

most appropriated to their natures; nor was he very nice in the choice of these beings, or very careful to preserve consistency in their figures or employment. Yet, on the whole, he may be reckoned the greatest master of *personification* that ever existed; and more original delineations of this kind are to be met with in the Faery Queene, than, perhaps, in all other poems united. Some of these are truly excellent, and are wrought into scenes of wonderful power. The allegory of *Despair* in the first book, may be placed at the head of all such fictions, as well for just conception and skilful management, as for unrivalled strength of description. It seems impossible by the medium of words to call up visual images in the mind with more force and distinctness, than is done in the pictures of the knight flying from Despair, of Despair himself in his cave, and of the Red-cross knight receiving the dagger from his hands. The allegory of *Mammon* is distinguished by richness of invention, in the multiplicity of personifications, and the romantic and sublime wildness of the scenery. The *Masque of Cupid* abounds in admirable single figures, though, perhaps, defective in the grouping. These are only a few instances out of the many striking efforts of imagination presented in the Faery Queene, which will ever

render it the favorite study of those who delight in this branch of poetical invention.

Of Spenser's allegorical figures it may be observed, that some are merely the natural representations of a human being under the influence of the passion or quality intended to be personified; some are wholly emblematical, expressing their character by means of types and symbols; and in some, both these modes of painting are combined. Examples of the first, or natural mode, may be found in the picture of *Fear* in the Masque of Cupid (B. iii. c. 12.); in that of *Despair* already mentioned; and in those of *Heavenly Contemplation* (B. i. c. 10.), and of *Hypocrisy* (B. i. c. 1.):—of the second, or emblematical mode, in the figure of *Fancy* in the Masque of Cupid; and in that of *Faith* (B. i. c. 10.):—of the third, or mixed mode, in *Disdain* (B. vi. c. 7.); *Pride* and her counsellors (B. i. c. 4.); *Care* (B. iv. c. 5.); and *Suspicion* (B. iii. c. 12.). It may readily be conceived, that this variety of delineation will produce occasional inconsistencies; that action and passion will often be confounded; and that the manner in which these fancy-formed beings are employed, will frequently be unsuitable to their nature. These are defects from which complex and continued allegory can never be free.

To create a new system of things, is too great an effort of the imagination to be long and uniformly supported; and Spenser, as the most copious of allegorists, is perhaps the most exuberant in faults. His forms are often grotesque and disgusting, sometimes impossible; and he not unfrequently makes a breach in the personification, by intermixing the ideas of reality with those of fiction. In a critical commentary it might be proper to point out all these imperfections; but in a preliminary essay it is sufficient to apprise the reader of taste that they exist, and leave the detection of them to his own attentive research. He will find them exemplified not only in Spenser, but in every other writer who has ventured far into the perilous regions of allegory.

Though there is a large fund of original matter in the Faery Queene, there is also much imitation, and even translation. Various passages from the classics, and still more from the Italian poets, are closely copied. The stores of ancient mythology are freely ransacked; nor is Spenser more careful than his Italian masters in avoiding the incongruity of mixing heathen with christian ideas. To confess the truth, he wrote too much, to write with uniform attention and judgement. His plan was vast; and to fill it up, required great industry as well as invention. He could not afford to

be nice in selection; and, like all other composers of very long poems, he was obliged to be contented with such matter as occurred, rather than with such as he would deliberately have approved. Most readers will think he too much abounds in prolix descriptions of single combats, which he found ready drawn to his hand in Bojardo, Ariosto, and Tasso. Indeed, his device of making all the virtues knights-errant, necessarily renders their contests with the opposite vices, so many battles.

The form of stanza he adopted (to proceed to the subject of *versification*) favored redundancy of style; and that, not merely in words, but in ideas. Dryden observes of himself, that a rhyme often helped him to a thought. Spenser's verse, requiring in each stanza four and three similar rhyming terminations, put him upon a perpetual effort to bring in words of a certain sound, however unconnected in their meaning with the current subject. This gave rise to distant associations, which sometimes produced images that really enriched the diction; though more frequently it flattened and debased it by impertinent additions. It likewise often compelled the poet to employ expedients that indicate the cruelty of the yoke to which he had injudiciously subjected himself. Expletives, tautologies, and circumlocutions, occur in almost every stanza, and gross

improprieties of speech are but too frequent. Vulgar and obsolete words are often mixed with those of a higher order; and when all these licenses fail in producing the requisite *tale* of rhyme, the writer does not scruple to mis-spell words, and to satisfy the eye at the expense of the ear. Yet the stanza of Spenser, when well executed, has a fulness of melody, and a sonorous majesty, scarcely equalled by any other English measure; and some later poets, who have bestowed due pains upon their versification, have copied it with great success. The concluding Alexandrine, which Spenser added to the eight-line stanza of the Italians, produces a fine effect when it accords with the subject; but in a long piece such a coincidence must frequently be wanting. Every elaborate measure, indeed, has the inconvenience of being ill adapted to the variety of epic composition. It with difficulty admits of quick changes and rapid movements, and is apt to produce languor and prolixity. Its frequent recurrence tires the ear; and its marked closes check the flow of eloquence. It has therefore been with true judgement that the best modern heroic poets have deserted the forms of versification which prevailed at the first revival of letters, and have recurred to the simpler models of Greece and Rome.

The *language* of the Faery Queene is cast in a

more antique mould than that of the age in which the writer lived. Spenser doubtless thought thereby to throw round his work a venerable air which suited the sober morality of the design, and the antiquity of the manners represented in its action. Many of the words and phrases, too, which even in his day had become obsolete, possessed a peculiar strength and vigour which happily coincided with his own very forcible style of description. It may be added, that, as we have already hinted, by the free employment of words of different ages, he often found means to extricate himself from the difficulties imposed by his system of rhymes. On the whole, however, it is probably best for a writer to confine himself to the current language of his time, and bend his efforts to give it all the perfection of which it is susceptible. In aiming at an antique diction, he will never do more than make a heterogeneous mixture, which is the real language of no one period, and must often appear quaint and affected, rather than simple and nervous. The English of Edward III. was too far distant from that of Elizabeth to admit of an easy combination; and as Spenser could not avoid making the substance of his style of the staple of his own age, the intermingled threads of Chaucer show like spots and stains, rather than agreeable variegations. The effect of his system

of language has been, that the Faery Queene cannot safely be quoted as authority for the proper use of words; and that while it is not intelligible to the common reader without a glossary, it affords an uncertain light to the verbal researches of the antiquarian critic.

What has been said may serve as a general introduction to the perusal of this work, which, with all its defects, will ever be considered as one of the capital productions of English poetry, and as conferring high honor on the writer and his country. It will probably not often be *read through;* nor will many think it worth while to bestow much study on its plan, or on the particular signification of all its mysteries and historical allusions. But detached parts will continue to give pleasure after repeated perusals; and the whole will be valued as a rich store-house of invention, resembling some of the remaining edifices of that age, which still astonish by their magnificent profusion of varied, though partly fantastic, ornament.

The other poems of Spenser do not require much discussion, though considerable in quantity, and various in subject. It is to be feared that the leading impression they will make upon a modern reader will be that of tediousness; a fault from which few productions of the early age of English

poetry are free. Yet some of these pieces are written in an elevated strain of thought, and exhibit a polish of language and versification which would scarcely be expected from that period. The *Hymns to Love and Beauty* contain many lines that may gratify the nicest ear; and their philosophical and doctrinal learning probably excited great admiration at the time when they were published. The *Sonnets* might have a claim to please those who could taste the studied conceits and far-fetched sentiments of Petrarch. The *Epithalamion* composed for his own marriage, possesses feeling as well as fancy, and wants only judicious curtailment to make it a very pleasing piece. The *Tears of the Muses* are eloquent complaints, but somewhat too monotonous. They assert with dignity the merits of literature; but it may be supposed, that, like all other censurers of their age, the poet exaggerates in his declamations on the discouragements to which learning was subjected, in a reign which we are taught to consider as peculiarly favorable to it. *Daphnaida* is an elegy of most unreasonable length on a person never heard of; and the pastoral strains in which Sir Philip Sidney is lamented, excite much less sympathy, than the simple prose narration of his heroic death. The most remarkable circumstance in this piece is a kind of appendix,

written in lines of three iambic feet without rhyme; a form of verse of which I know not another instance. The *Ruins of Time* is a fine idea, inadequately executed. The Roman colony of Verulam was never of consequence enough to be selected as the leading example of change of fortune; and the adulatory lamentation of the death of a private nobleman is unworthy of the high theme of the poem. In the scenery of this piece Spenser has adopted the antient notion that the Thames once ran by Verulam; an improbable fable, by which more is lost in point of reality, than is gained in description. The pieces entitled *Colin Clout's come home again*, and *Mother Hubbard's Tale*, refer to characters and events in the court-history of the time, which it would be difficult now to elucidate, should any commentator think the task worth attempting; but they were probably interesting to contemporary readers. The lines already quoted from the latter, describing the miseries of a courtier, yield to few in the language for energy of feeling and nervous brevity of expression.

AN ESSAY

ON

THE POETRY

OF

MILTON.

AMONG the names rendered illustrious by intellectual superiority, of which this island justly boasts, a few stand so conspicuously prominent, that they immediately occur to every native whose theme is the glory of his country. Of these, the votaries of science are, perhaps, enumerated with most confidence, because their merits have been equally recognised by foreign nations, and their fame has even been reflected back with additional lustre to their own. In every part of civilized Europe, Bacon and Newton are placed in the first rank of human genius. But the celebrity of men distinguished in the literature of their country, must not only be originally of home-growth, but must ever have its principal seat at home, as being there alone duly estimated, and fully understood. There, indeed, it may rise to as great a height as

that of the preceding class, and may even excite more general and enthusiastic admiration. Few Englishmen will now make it a question whether MILTON be entitled to march in an equal rank with the two philosophers above mentioned; and scarcely any, it is presumed, who have a true relish of English poetry, will assign to him a second place among his poetical brethren. That his fame has been continually growing, and has only within a late period attained its full magnitude, ought to be regarded as a proof of the solidity of its foundation. How might he triumph, could he now behold those who were once his rivals, and even his imagined superiors, fallen far, far beneath him; and his own memory decorated with all the honors which national pride and attachment can bestow! To trace the progress of such a man, and ascertain that peculiarity of excellence which has placed him on such an eminence, cannot but be a highly interesting exercise. At the same time, the task is arduous. I feel it to be such, and engage in it with awe. If it be true, as D'Alembert has said, that no one is fit to estimate a great man, who does not himself belong to the class, how few should venture to sit in judgement on Milton! But I pretend only to give the opinion of a humble individual, whose chief claims are impartiality, and long meditation on the works he means to examine.

The chronological order in which I propose to survey them, can scarcely fail of suggesting some striking comparisons of the author with himself at different periods of his life, and of exhibiting that spectacle of the gradual disclosure and growth of genius, which is one of the most captivating to a philosophical inquirer.

From early youth, Milton seems to have been characterised by a lofty and elevated mind. Educated in a distinguished seat of learning, and deeply imbued with the classical literature which at that period, perhaps, was studied with more ardor than it has ever been since, he soared to no common height in his juvenile exercises, and attained an excellence in Latin poetry which is a topic of admiration to his biographers. The intrinsic value of his performances in this class has, indeed, been differently estimated; but it is certain that they bespeak an imagination fed with no trivial or vulgar ideas, and a soul big with high resolves, and the anticipation of future fame. Various passages in his Latin poems have been adduced as denoting the seeds of great designs which then lurked in his mind; but none are more striking than the following lines of an address in English verse "to his Native Language," delivered at a college exercise, when he was nineteen years old:

Yet I had rather, if I were to chuse,
Thy service in some graver subject use,
Such as may make thee search thy coffers round,
Before thou clothe my fancy in fit sound:
Such where the deep-transported mind may soar
Above the wheeling poles, and at Heav'n's door
Look in, and see each blissful deity
How he before the thund'rous throne doth lie.

These strains plainly indicate the future bard whose "Muse with angels did divide to sing."

Though years before this period he had preluded in English poetry with some sweet though juvenile verses "On the death of a fair Infant dying of a cough," which deserve mention in his poetical progress, as, both from the style and the measure, they show him to have been an early student of Spenser, and prove that he was capable of attaining all those graces of versification in rhymed stanzas, which had been reached by that master.

A very singular composition in his twenty-first year displayed at the same time the grandeur of his genius, and the immaturity of his judgement. It was a Hymn on the Nativity, the greater part of which is replete with the puerile and unnatural conceit of Donne, and other early English poets;—a school which lastingly perverted Cowley, though a genius worthy of better things; but from the baneful influence of which Milton at length broke loose, like his own Lion at the crea-

tion from the incumbent soil. That he possessed the power of thus redeeming himself, might be concluded from several stanzas of this very piece, in which he describes the supposed desertion of the heathen oracles by their inspiring deities, not only with exquisite learning, but with a warmth and purity of painting which he himself scarcely ever surpassed.

Retired to private study, another school of poetry seems to have engaged much of his attention. This was the Italian, at that time beyond comparison the first among the moderns, and, indeed, already the school of Spenser and other English writers of celebrity. The wildness of fancy, united with dignity of sentiment and suavity of expression, which characterised the masters in ths school, could not fail of captivating such a mind as that of Milton; accordingly, strong traces of the impressions he received from the poets of Italy are discernible even in his greatest and most mature performances.

No poet, then, ever came to the practice of his art more replenished with stores accumulated from the richest productions of various ages and countries. So copious, indeed, were these materials, that a genius less vigorous would have been in danger of being overwhelmed by them, and of exchanging all originality, for imitation or allusion.

Nor can it be denied that his learning is sometimes obtrusive; yet its effect is rather to suggest ideas derived from memory, as from a general stock, than to render him a copyist of particular passages. In this respect a striking difference appears between his manner and that of Tasso, who, inventive as he is in the plan and many of the incidents of his great work, scruples not to introduce long and direct translations from Virgil and other poets. This *originality of imitation* in Milton becomes peculiarly conspicuous on a critical examination of his similes. In most of these he may be detected taking a hint from Homer or some other ancient; but he has made it so much his own, both by added circumstances in the description, and by novelty in the application, that his merit of invention is little less than if the whole idea had been primarily of his own growth. In Milton's mind, all images and impressions, whether received from nature or art, from reading or observation, seem to have been so blended and amalgamated, so much converted into the proper aliment of the intellect, that their transcripts in his writings take a kind of homogeneous form, and what might appear study in another man, in him is spontaneous effusion.

He was twenty-six years old when he produced his Mask of Comus, a composition sufficient of

itself to raise its author to such a height of reputation, that one greater in extent, rather than in excellence, was alone wanting to place him at the summit of English poetry. Its story, indeed, is simple; its leading idea founded upon ancient mythology; and its conduct and character undramatic, if to a drama it be essential to interest the passions, and give a natural representation of human action and sentiment. But they who have made these objections to it, have not, perhaps, enough considered, that the *Mask*, then a favorite entertainment of a learned age, was regarded as a peculiar species of composition, the nature of which was rather poetical than dramatic, and which sought rather to amuse the fancy with allegorical and mythological fictions, and to elevate the soul with lofty conceptions, than to present scenes of common life. In this view, what work ever fulfilled its purpose more than Comus? Where, in *any* language, can be found such an union of rich description, grand and beautiful imagery, and lofty philosophy, expressed in the noblest diction? How admirable the contrast between the loose morals and seductive painting of the son of Circe, and the virgin purity and severe principles of the Lady! and how carefully has the poet secured the final impression in favor of virtue, not only by the catastrophe, but by the

weight of argument, conformably to his own character and the sobriety of the age—an impression too little consulted in the modern alteration of Comus! This poem likewise possesses great beauty of versification, varying from the lightest and gayest anacreontics, to the most majestic and sonorous heroics. On the whole, if an example were required of a work made up of the *very essence of poetry*, perhaps none of equal length in any language could be produced answering this character in so high a degree as the Mask of Comus. Its unfitness for a public stage will be deemed a small objection by one who attributes this unfitness chiefly to its *purity* and its *poetry*. Were it again to be represented on a nobleman's private theatre, a presage might be drawn of the improving taste and morals of the age, which modern *theatricals* (as they are called) are very far from affording.

The ideas in this piece are for the most part derived from classical sources. The mythology is originally Grecian; the philosophy is that of Plato; but it has been justly remarked that in the language and imagery there are various imitations of English poets. Those of Fletcher's "Faithful Shepherdess" are the most conspicuous; and Spenser and Shakespear may be traced in particular passages. Some critics have, indeed, asserted

that Comus is written "in Shakespear's manner." I confess, I cannot discern the resemblance, unless it be in the flow of versification, which has the ease and freedom of that poet's best specimens. In other respects, the strain of poetry is of a more elevated and finished kind than is to be paralleled in Shakespear, except in some short passages. Some puerile conceits are to be found in this fine performance; but they are so few, that on comparing the author with himself at the time of writing his Christmas hymn, he will appear to have improved in judgement no less than in the compass of his poetical powers.

The ALLEGRO and PENSEROSO appeared shortly after Comus. These are, perhaps, the most popular poems in the English language, and have had the greatest number of imitators. The liveliness, truth, and variety of their imagery accommodate them to the taste of all readers; while the loftier strains to which they sometimes ascend, distinguish them from common descriptive poetry, and administer delight to more select judges. I do not find that Milton has been a borrower in the plan of these pieces, which are exact counterparts to each other, and form two complete pictures. In the *Allegro*, or Cheerful Man, all the images are assembled that are capable of exciting joy and pleasure; and with such felicity are they dis-

played, that I believe no one ever read it without feeling a temporary exhilaration of soul, like that from an agreeable prospect, or a lively strain of music. *Il Penseroso,* or the Thoughtful, Contemplative Man, presents, on the contrary, all the images that are adapted to excite, not a black or gloomy melancholy, (which appears to have been the conception of some of its imitators,) but a sublime seriousness, favorable to high fancy and philosophic musing, and in its turn not less grateful to the mind than the former emotion. If, then, the pieces are regarded as opposites, they are so, like day and night, which succeed alternately in the same harmonious system, and gradually shade off into each other. Indeed, the differences presented by the diurnal and nocturnal face of things constitute much of the distinct character of the two pieces; the first of which opens with early dawn, and pursues the course of the sun, while the second commences with evening, and continues till day-break. Both shift the scene from country to town; and in the latter, some of their objects are similar, for the pomp and pageantry of the theatre is introduced into each. In the Allegro, however, the dramatic entertainments are masks and comedies; and it is remarkable, that in conjunction with Jonson, as a comic writer, the poet mentions Shakespear, characterising him as a

"child of fancy, warbling his native wood-notes;" and thus manifestly alluding to his creations of the imagination, such as the Tempest, the Midsummer Night's Dream, and the Winter's Tale; and passing over his more serious compositions. And when, in the Penseroso, "gorgeous Tragedy" makes its appearance on the scene, its subjects are represented to be those of the ancient Greek tragic theatre, of which Milton was an assiduous student. He hints, it is true, at some modern attempts in this species of the drama, but terms them "rare," and particularises neither the works nor the authors.

It is further observable in these two pieces, that while the personification with which each commences is founded upon classic mythology, some of the most striking imagery in the body of the poems is derived from those gothic fables and popular superstitions with which he had stored his imagination. Both pieces terminate with the *power of music*, to which, numerous passages in his works show him to have been uncommonly sensible. Since musical expression adapts itself to a variety of emotions, there is no incongruity in thus making both his contrasted characters lovers of harmony. Yet if Jessica in Shakespear says rightly

> I'm never merry when I hear sweet music,

which I conceive to be founded on just observation, perhaps, the "Lydian airs," the "linked sweetness long drawn out," and the "melting voice," are somewhat misplaced as the delights of *Mirth*, though they might well belong to *Pleasure*. The true music of Mirth is, indeed, introduced before, in the "merry bells," and "jocund rebecs;" and it is admirably echoed in the light tripping versification of the lines describing the scenes of rural jollity. So happily adapted, indeed, is the measure of L'Allegro to its subject, that we may almost lament that the uniformity of contrast obliged the poet to make use of the same in the Penseroso. Yet, either from the impression made on the mind by the imagery, or from the poet's art in the choice of words, the ear does not seem, on reading the latter piece, to require a verse more concordant with the subject. Milton has generally been represented as not very successful in his management of rhyme; yet I think the English language does not afford many better specimens of the kind than the two pieces before us; in which, though the frequent recurrence of the rhyme has sometimes given rise to a constrained or unmeaning expression, the general flow is easy and natural, and the coincidences of sound and sense are sometimes extremely happy.

Another production of nearly the same period

of Milton's life is his LYCIDAS, a monody on the death of a friend. This is a piece of a singular cast and character, and rather adapted to the artificial taste of the academic, than the natural relish of a common reader. Indeed, though it contains much exquisite poetry, which could only have been produced by a genius of the first class, it is liable, as a whole, to many solid objections. The use of pastoral allegory, if to be justified by example, had at that time the practice of all the most eminent poets in its favor. Every occurrence, joyful or sad, on which verse could be demanded, was habitually represented under the mask of rural life, and all the *dramatis personæ* were converted into shepherds and shepherdesses. Sympathy (as Dr. Johnson has well observed) was almost entirely precluded by this abolition of reality; and besides the tiresome uniformity of the fiction, the pastoral imagery could only admit of a very strained and awkward application to the circumstances of courtly and refined society. In one profession, indeed, the allegorical resemblance was favored by common language, and the *religious pastor* had long been in possesion of the character and insignia belonging to a *shepherd* of the flock committed to his charge. It had been found a task of little difficulty to run parallels of considerable length and minuteness between the meta-

phorical pastoral office, and the real one. Spenser had done this in his "Shepherd's Calendar," though with more perseverance than felicity. Under this disguise, he had spoken more freely than he would probably have otherwise done, against the corruptions of the church. This was an example which Milton would be prompt to imitate, for one of his earliest passions appears to have been zeal for ecclesiastical reform. It is not unlikely, therefore, that the opportunity of uttering bold truths on a delicate and hazardous topic, was a principal inducement with him to adopt the pastoral form on the present occasion. He was, moreover, in this poem to support his reputation as a scholar, and a member of the university of Cambridge, which printed a collection of funereal verses to the memory of the same unfortunate youth, among which Lycidas first appeared. It should be added, that Milton's friendship with the deceased was of the most intimate and affectionate kind; whence real feeling was likely to struggle for expression amid the conceits of poetical fiction. This combination of views and circumstances will account for most of the peculiarities of the performance. Its measure is loose and irregular, well suiting the character of rusticity affixed to the poem, and favorable to the sudden bursts of passion by which it is animated. The

ear is occasionally disappointed by missing the expected return of rhyme; yet the general effect is pleasing, and the melody of some of the passages is uncommonly grateful. The form of verse seems borrowed from some of the free strains of Italian poetry, in which Milton was not only a student, but a composer. With respect to the matter, it abounds in classical imitation, as well in the particular images, as in the general style and ordonnance. Its basis is Virgil's eclogue or elegy of "Gallus;" and Theocritus and other Grecian poets have contributed to its learned decorations. The allegorical part, however, is derived from a totally different source; and no judicious critic will defend the incongruous mixture of heathen and christian mythology, which has sprung from the author's double purpose, of displaying his erudition, and taking a part in the theological contentions of the time. Nor can it be denied that the learning of the piece sometimes approaches to pedantry, and has too much the air of academic ostentation. The construction of some of the sentences is likewise harsh and obscure; and the expression of grief is occasionally too playful and artificial to excite sympathy. Yet these faults are compensated by numerous beauties of thought and language; and perhaps no composition of this

author more clearly indicates the poet, than his Lycidas.

Soon after the printing of this piece, Milton visited France and Italy; and the view and society of the latter country, then the favorite seat of the Muses, may well be supposed to have fed his poetic enthusiasm; especially, as a patron of the great Tasso, Manso marquis of Villa, honored him with his notice and praises. His vein of Latin poetry does, indeed, appear to have been refreshed by his travels; and Manso, Diodati, and other foreign friends, were celebrated in new and elegant strains: but as an English poet his voice was doomed to suffer a long suspension, which might seem to preclude all hopes of its revival. On his return to his native country, first the engagements of a private academy, comprising a very extensive plan of education; then, a long and active course of controversy, religious and political; and finally, the office of Latin secretary for state affairs, so much occupied his time and thoughts, that the gentler Muses were deterred from paying their usual visits. During this long period, scarcely any thing fell from his pen worthy the name of poetry, except a few sonnets, written upon incidental topics. In this elaborate species of composition, ill suited to our language and

genius, Milton can by no means be reckoned a master. Few of his sonnets exhibit much poetical spirit; none, much elegance of versification. Some of them may afford pleasure by their manly cast of thought and vigor of expression; but, on the whole, they contribute nothing to his fame as a poet.

About his 50th year he had the misfortune totally to lose his sight, which had been long in a progress of decay. Of this calamity he felt the full force, as he has evinced by several pathetic passages in his later works. But though he complains that "wisdom was at one inlet quite shut out," it is not probable that his store of poetical imagery incurred any considerable diminution from his loss. He had made a poet's use of his eyes while he possessed them; and he had long enough enjoyed the sense of seeing to be indelibly impressed with all the ideas of beauty and grandeur which it is capable of affording. Not long afterwards, the great national change produced by the Restoration exposed him to personal danger, and for ever blasted all the hopes he might have entertained of an easy and honored old age. He was, indeed, suffered to live quietly, but it was in obscurity and discountenance:—how well deserved, is not here the question; but this darkness and desolation, these "evil days," as he

thought them, were probably the efficient cause of the PARADISE LOST! He renounced the design of pursuing those tales of chivalry and romance, those heroical, but human topics, which had once occupied his poetic meditations; and he sought his theme, as he did his consolation, in those scriptures which had always been a principal object of his study.

> — — — — — Chief
> Thee, Sion, and the flowery brooks beneath,
> That wash thy hallowed feet, and warbling flow,
> Nightly I visit. P. L. III. 29.

It was the divine Urania who now cheered his solitude; and under her inspiration he was satisfied with the consciousness of a more than mortal flight, and with the intelligent applause of an "audience fit, though few." This was the happiest mood for one who was to undertake a performance so great, so novel, so remote from common tastes and examples; for one who was to resign temporary popularity, in order to make future ages his own.

The number of epic poems which have obtained general and lasting fame is so small, that each is susceptible of being distinctly characterised. The PARADISE LOST is essentially a *theological poem.* Its subject, properly speaking, is not merely that announced in the opening—"Man's first disobe-

dience, and the fruit of the forbidden tree"—but the whole celestial economy, and that train of events which produced the creation of this world, together with the contest between divine benevolence and diabolical malignity in fixing the condition of its inhabitants. The disobedience of man is, indeed, the great incident which the machinery is employed to bring into effect, and which influences all the after-events of the piece; but the cause of that disobedience is deeply laid in occurrences long anterior and of higher importance, involving the fate and actions of beings infinitely superior to the human. It is in this part alone that Milton appears as an *inventor*; for his deference to the authority of the sacred writings has restrained him, in relating the history or allegory of the fall of man, from making any considerable additions to the original narration. It is therefore a peculiarity of this poem, that what in others is called the *machinery*, and is no more than an ornamental adjunct, or, at most, an occasional auxiliary, is, in this, the main subject. For although the fate of the human personages is the point on which the interest is concentrated, the agents in its determination are superhuman beings, on whom all the proper *action* of the fable depends, and whose powers and characters are the principal objects of the reader's curiosity.

But since it is impossible for a man to form any idea of moral or intellectual qualities which is not primarily derived from human nature, these beings of poetical creation must, after all, be essentially *men*; and their discriminating characters can be no other than compounds of such qualities as we see existing among ourselves, exalted, perhaps, in degree, but substantially the same. To the best and most perfect of beings we can assign only such virtue and such wisdom as our experience of mankind has brought to our acquaintance; and we can give no other features of vice and depravity to the worst, than such as we have viewed in our fellow-creatures. Further, even the external figures of beauty and deformity in our imaginations, must be mere transcripts of pictures already formed by our senses. We can compound differently from what nature has done; we can aggrandize and diminish; but we can form no truly original conceptions. And as the strongest impressions, both agreeable and disgusting, have been made upon us by beings in the human shape, there is no other which we can so happily associate with moral character.

All poets, therefore, from Homer to his latest successors, who have intermixed *machinery* with their fables, have done no more than superinduce a set of agents really *human*, though distinguished

by a different local residence, and by the possession of powers and attributes which in man would be called supernatural. The grossness of the heathen mythology even caused the celestial personages to fall below the human, in all that constitutes real dignity of nature. The divinities of Homer and Virgil are distinguished by nothing so much as bad passions, and an insatiable appetite for doing mischief; and the heroes of those poets are much more estimable than the gods. Milton's system, as it was infinitely superior to theirs in a moral view, so it was more favorable to poetical effect. By dividing his spiritual beings into the two great classes of good and bad, he was able to keep their character and agency perfectly distinct, and to exhibit opposite moral qualities in all their strength and purity. At the same time, by assigning to each class a community of natural powers, he produced that kind of balance which was requisite to throw any interest upon scenes in which they should be opposed to each other. A difficulty however occurred, which it was impossible entirely to surmount, and which, in fact, forms the chief defect of the plan of Paradise Lost. The transcendent excellence of the Supreme Being in the Jewish and Christian systems, to which Milton has most religiously adhered, places him so much beyond all parallel in

respect to power and dignity, and renders him so indubitably the master of all events, that the ambiguity of success which might be preserved in a mere contention between angelic beings, similar in power, though opposite in character, is entirely destroyed, when the good are represented as the immediate delegates and ministers of the Deity, and aided by his resistless might. Homer could make even Jupiter himself subject to the decrees of Fate; but the God of Milton is the creator of fate, the original planner and sovereign disposer of every occurence. It is not, however, the philosophical difficulty of an intermixture of evil in a world created by infinite power and infinite goodness, which *peculiarly* presses upon our poet; but it is the contest which he imagines between the partisans and the adversaries of the Supreme Being. The latter of these, though in their pristine state admitted to a direct view and comprehension of the divine majesty, must yet be supposed to have entertained the absurd idea of effectual resistance to his will; while the former, firm in their faith, and confident in the matchless power of their great Lord, have no room left for the exertion of those virtues which most inspire esteem and admiration. Hence, although the original revolt of Satan and his party is an act of madness, for which an adequate motive can scarce-

ly be conceived, yet, in the subsequent transactions, every display of the qualities which can be termed *heroical* necessarily belongs to them. Courage to dare, fortitude to endure, perseverance and self-devotion in the chief, tried fidelity in the followers, are only to be found among those who contend under circumstances of known danger and difficulty, and struggle with misfortune and discomfiture. The Son, moving on to sure victory, armed with all the terrors of his Father's majesty, is indeed a most awful and sublime figure; but Satan, taking upon himself an enterprise full of toil and hazard, which had made the boldest of his chiefs to shudder, and regarding his exalted station only as a call to higher exertions for the general advantage, is a real hero. Nor can we withhold a sentiment of applause and sympathy for that fallen host which

> — — — — — faithful stood
> Their glory wither'd;

and in the midst of "fierce pains," prided themselves in obedience to their great leader.

It must then, I think, be allowed that Paradise Lost really labors under the defect which has been charged upon it, that of engaging the high passions at the commencement of the poem in favor of the cause it is meant to condemn. Yet the art of the poet in counteracting this impression,

by assigning a perpetual superiority in point of sanctity and purity of sentiment to the angelic host, and making the devils themselves depose, as it were, in testimony of the justice as well as the power of that Being against whom they have revolted, is eminently conspicuous. It may be added, that in proportion as the fate of the human persons of the fable becomes more interesting, the diabolical machinations against them excite more detestation; and that Satan and his crew at length lose all their grandeur, and sink into equal contempt and abhorrence. It is true, this change is the cause that the latter books fall extremely short of the earlier in sublimity; and that the reader's interest, which undoubtedly at the commencement is placed upon the contest in heaven, is finally transferred to a totally different scene, and to new actors.

The field in which the imagination of Milton freely expatiates is the extra-mundane system, the regions of heaven, hell, and chaos. In describing and peopling these scenes, he has displayed a force and sublimity of conception which no poet has ever equalled. He has expanded our ideas to the utmost limits of possibility; and has filled the fancy with things new and strange, many of which, painted by an inferior artist, would have formed only grotesques, but under the touch of

his genius become pictures of unparalleled grandeur. It cannot, however, be affirmed that his success is every where alike; for while his view of the infernal mansions, his council in Pandemonium, and his Satanic voyage, are replete with the true sublime in imagery and sentiment, his battle between the faithful and the revolted angels is puerile and full of inconsistencies. Scenes of combat are grand in human action, because they call forth exertions of the soul, which, however mischievous in their effects, we cannot help admiring; but, transferred to immortal and nearly impassive beings, they become mere child's play. They resemble those engagements of Italian mercenaries in complete armour, in which, after half a day's fighting, scarcely any other mischief was done, than unhorsing some of the combatants, and trampling them in the dirt. That the sixth book of Paradise Lost should have been the subject of so much admiration, must be attributed to an artificial taste formed by the works of Homer and his imitators, which gave to deeds of arms the first place among the splendid incidents of epic poetry. Yet there are in it many detached passages of great excellence, and the diction is highly animated and poetical.

If the sublimity of Milton's genius is chiefly displayed in his flight to regions beyond human

ken, its elegance and beauty are most conspicuous where he descends to earth, and paints the first pair of mankind in that delicious Paradise which was the happy abode of their innocence. Nothing can be more admirable than the art with which he has allied all the tender softness and even the voluptuousness of the Italian school, with the purity and sanctity of a religious record. Descriptions so charming to the sense were never before joined to sentiments so dignifying to the soul. It must, however, be observed, that the features of character he has given to Adam and Eve do not altogether accord with that simplicity which might be expected in beings newly created, and whose minds must be totally unpractised in abstract reasoning and reflection. Adam, in particular, exhibits a fund of moral wisdom which in him could not possibly be the acquisition of experience; and the manner in which he is affected with what he beholds in reality or vision, is by no means that of one who views objects for the first time. This prematurity of understanding, however, seems in a certain degree necessary in order to render them actors in the scenes in which they are engaged; indeed, the very use of speech in them supposes a faculty acquired differently from the common mode of practice and instruction. The Rabbins have assigned to the first man perfect

knowledge of all arts and sciences. Milton has been contented with representing him as possessed of strong sense and ready apprehension; and though, philosophically speaking, there may be as much error in his conception of the character, as in that of the Rabbins, yet he will scarcely be found to have exceeded the license which the construction of his fable demanded. As the scriptural account of the temptation and fall, to which Milton has literally adhered, was not sufficient to fill up the measure of an epic poem, he has enlarged the field of human action, by a proleptical view of the leading events which were to attend the descendants of Adam, communicated in vision or narration through the ministry of the angel Michael. For this kind of anticipation he had an example and authority in the practice of several of his predecessors; and he has employed it with the happiest effect. The pictures of peace and war, of the deluge, and of the patriarchal life, are scarcely to be surpassed by any scenes of descriptive poetry, and they contribute to sustain the interest of the piece, which, after the great catastrophe of the fall, would otherwise be apt to languish. For though Milton seems to have considered the purely theological part of his work as the most important, and to have expected that his elaborate argumentations concerning free-will,

grace, justification, atonement, and the like, would engage the attention of the religious reader, it may safely be affirmed that Paradise Lost would long ago have been consigned to oblivion, had these been its only topics. And it is undoubtedly the large admixture of passages in which

God the Father turns a school-divine,

that justifies the assertion, that it is a poem "more praised than read;" and that few who sit down to *read it through* do not find it a task of which they grow somewhat weary before it is accomplished. But, in reality, long compositions in poetry are seldom re-perused in their whole extent; and the reader, whose curiosity with respect to the plan and termination is already gratified, usually contents himself afterwards with recurring to favorite passages of distinguished excellence. Of such passages, what piece can boast more than Paradise Lost; and whither can the exhausted mind resort with surer success, to renovate itself with those high ideas and enthusiastic sensations, which it is the prerogative of poetry to excite in so superior a degree?

The style of this poem is in some measure characteristic of its nature and subject. With the severe and even naked smplicity of primitive language, it unites every figurative form that can

give elevation and dignity to speech, and that uncommon construction and use of words which impresses the stamp of erudition. It is, indeed, to be observed, that Milton's prose is formed upon a like imitation of the languages of antiquity; and this taste seems to have grown upon him as he advanced in years. Perhaps, a sense of the increasing weight and importance of his subjects led him to clothe his thoughts in terms more remote from vulgar use. It is certain, likewise, that the example of the ancient poets themselves, particularly Virgil and his followers, sanctioned the practice of employing antiquated words and the anomalies of diction, in order to establish a characteristic difference between the styles of poetry and prose. The annotators on Milton seem in general to have regarded as peculiar beauties his learned forms of phraseology and foreign senses; and many of his imitators appear to have thought that in these particulars consisted the essence of *Miltonic diction.* I confess it, however, to be my opinion, that his taste really suffered from the barbarism of a controversial age, in the disputes of which he had borne so conspicuous a part; and that, although his poetical genius had been wonderfully preserved amid the wreck of elegant literature, his delicate perception of beauty and propriety in expression had been

somewhat impaired since the golden days of his Comus.

With respect to the versification of Paradise Lost, it is justly considered as exhibiting the whole compass of harmony and variety of which blank verse is capable. No poet seems to have possessed a more musical ear than Milton; and as well in the simple melody of varied pauses, as in the adaption of sounds to particular expressions, he displays all the power of a master. At the same time, it must be allowed that his long work abounds with instances of violations of the common rules of measure, which would scarcely be tolerated in an inferior writer. Of these, however, a part are to be imputed to design; the irregularity or defect being manifestly accommodated to the meaning: and the judgement of the poet in such cases has been sanctioned by the admiration of critics and imitators. A much greater number are merely the products of haste and negligence; of a mind too much absorbed by serious contemplations to attend to the niceties of position; and pouring forth unpremeditated strains, which the fervor of his temper, joined with his bodily infirmity, did not permit him to elaborate into perfection. These may well be excused, but it is prejudice or false taste to admire them; and they who have made Milton's negligences an apology

for their own indolence or carelessness, should have reflected that when faults are tolerated, it is in consideration of a decided preponderancy of excellencies.

After the attention bestowed upon Paradise Lost, few remarks will suffice respecting PARADISE REGAINED. This poem, whether it be ranked among the epic or heroic, is in reality a kind of after-piece, springing rather from the theological than the poetical conception of the great work above mentioned. This idea of it is confirmed by the history of its origin, which was from the suggestion of the quaker Elwood, who seems to have thought the poet's task incomplete, till he should have rounded his system by adding a Paradise *Found*, to a Paradise *Lost*. Its subject is a single event in the history of Christ; his temptation by Satan in the wilderness: and it is very remarkable, that in Milton's divinity the triumph of the Son of God on this occasion should be considered as of itself completing the redemption of mankind, and being the efficient cause of the recovery of Paradise. The commentators suppose that he adopted this notion, for the sake of contrasting that *disobedience* of Adam which caused him to yield to temptation, with the *obedience* of Christ, which enabled him to resist it. But whatever be thought of the soundness of

Milton's theology in this point, his poetical judgement may justly be called in question: for, the Temptation forms so inconsiderable a part of that eventful history of the life and actions of the founder of the Christian religion, which is indelibly impressed upon the memory of every reader of the scriptures, that it is impossible the mind can be satisfied with a narration of it given as a whole, and made a kind of parallel to the splendid story of Paradise Lost. The awful words, *It is finished*, will never by a Christian be taken from the solemn catastrophe of the death of his Saviour, and be applied to the completion of his first trial.

The Temptation, however, considered as a single scene of the great drama, possesses that character of the marvellous, which renders it not unsuitable for poetry. It is true, there is less action in it than discourse; and Milton's reverence for the original records would not permit him to make any material addition to the circumstances; yet he has happily intermixed with the dialogue, which forms the chief matter of the piece, as great a variety of description as the subject would afford. It perhaps had been better for him to have avoided any community of poetical fiction with the Paradise Lost, since it was not likely that his fancy should again soar to the sub-

lime heights it had reached in that poem. Thus, the consultation among the infernal powers which forms the *machinery* of Paradise Regained, is so faint a copy of Pandemonium, and Satan and his chiefs appear in it with a lustre so diminished, that the character of an inferior production is at once fixed in the reader's mind. Without such a parallel, Paradise Regained might well sustain itself, as a work abounding in excellent reasoning and sentiment, and containing many pleasing sketches of natural scenery. There are even parts in which the Miltonic genius displays itself in all the vigor of its best days; nor do I know any passages in all the works of this great poet to which a reader may oftener recur with fresh delight, than those in which *bird's-eye* views are painted of the three capitals, Ctesiphon, Rome, and Athens. It is impossible for learning more happily to aid the imagination, than it has done in suggesting the characteristic features by which these places are distinguished and contrasted; and the pen never more perfectly fulfilled the task of the pencil than in these living descriptions. On the whole, though Paradise Regained was justly regarded by the public as a falling-off from the majesty of Paradise Lost, yet it is a piece which Milton only could have written, and bears all the peculiar marks of his master-hand. Tra-

dition says that it was his own favorite work, and this circumstance has been adduced as a proof of the incompetency of a writer to judge of his own performances. But it is probable that Milton in this case judged rather as a theologian than as a poet; and having with much art contrived to introduce all the leading doctrines of Christianity into this piece, he considered it as the consummation of a grand scheme, and measured its value by the importance of its subject.

There remains to speak of the only tragedy composed by Milton, his SAMSON AGONISTES, also the work of this declining period of his life. We are not to conceive of Milton as a writer for a modern stage. His own taste, and that of the public at his time, with respect to dramatic compositions, were formed upon totally different principles; nor could his name and character be expected to obtain favor for him in an English theatre. He therefore did not think it worth while to adapt his Samson for the stage; whence it appears without any division into acts and scenes. His idea of tragedy was entirely derived from Grecian models, which he has finely characterised in the following lines:

> Thence what the lofty grave tragedians taught
> In Chorus or Iambic, teachers best
> Of moral prudence, with delight received

> In brief sententious precepts, while they treat
> Of Fate, and Chance, and change in human life,
> High actions and high passions best describing.
>
> *Par. Reg.* IV. 261.

It is this strain of moral precept and sententious remark which he has chosen for his imitation; and he has chosen as their vehicle a story simple in its texture, affording neither the intricacies of plot, nor the play of violent passions. Indeed, as Milton's knowledge of mankind appears to have been drawn more from books than from personal observation, and to have consisted rather in general propositions than particular facts, he was little qualified to paint the genuine language of passion, or to trace the workings of the affections through all the windings of the heart. But what he attempted, he well performed. He gave a closet drama, replete with admirable maxims of prudence and morality, public and private; containing, indeed, few passages of high poetry, but many sentences of strong and nervous expression, excellently fitted to dwell upon the memory, and to make a part of that store of true philosophy which, in a well-furnished mind, lies ready for the uses of life. The most pathetic part of this piece is Samson's lamentation for his blindness, in which the poet copied from his own sensations.

The scene with Harapha is spirited; and the description of the final catastrophe has the coloring of a master. It is observable, that though the form of the composition is Grecian, the manners and sentiments are purely Hebrew, in strict conformity to the scene and persons. It has been invidiously suggested, that Milton chose the story of Samson for the opportunity it gave him of satirizing bad wives. I should rather imagine, that the assertion of pure religion, and the resistance to tyrannical power, were the chief circumstances which gave him a predilection for this fable; though it must be acknowledged that here, as well as in his Paradise Lost, he holds extremely high the authority of a husband, and represents the female sex as objects of caution and suspicion to a wise man.

Such, in a compendious view, are the *Poems of Milton*, the richest treasure of the kind our language possesses, unless an exception be pleaded for the works of Shakespeare. But although these abound in passages of the noblest poetry, yet their distinguishing merit is of another kind. It is the insight into the human heart, and the delineation of all its passions and affections, which place Shakespeare beyond all competition among his brother-dramatists. In pure poetry, his flights,

though lofty, are short and wavering; while Milton, upborne by the combined powers of native genius and unremitting study, elevated by all that can give force and dignity to the mind, holds on a steadfast course, which knows no limits but those impassable by the human intellect.

AN ESSAY

ON THE

HEROIC POEM

OF

GONDIBERT.

A PERSON engaged in the pursuit of literary fame must be severely mortified on observing the very speedy neglect into which writers of high merit so frequently fall. The revolution of centuries, the extinction of languages, the vast convulsions which agitate a whole people, are causes which may well be submitted to in overwhelming an author with oblivion; but that in the same country, with little variation of language or manners, the delights of one age should become utter strangers in the next, is surely an immaturity of fate which conveys reproach upon the inconsistency of national taste. That noble band, the English Poets, have ample reason for complaining to what unjust guardians they have entrusted their renown. While we crown the statue of Shakespeare as the prince of dramatic poets, shall

we forget the works, and almost the names, of his contemporaries who possessed so much of a kindred spirit? Shall the Italian *Pastor Fido* and *Amynta* stand high in our estimation, and the *Faithful Shepherdess*, the most beautiful pastoral that a poet's fancy ever formed, be scarcely known amongst us? Shall we feel the fire of heroic poetry in translations from Greece and Rome, and never search for it in the native productions of our own country?

The capital work of *Sir William D'avenant*, which I now desire to call forth from its obscurity, may well be considered as in a state of oblivion, since we no where meet with allusions to it, or quotations from it, in our modern writers; and few, I imagine, even of the professed students in English classics, would think their taste discredited by confessing that they had never read GONDIBERT. A very learned and ingenious critic, in his well-known *Discourse upon Poetical Imitation*, has, indeed, taken notice of this poem; but though he bestows all due praise upon its author, yet the purpose for which it is mentioned being to instance an essential error, we cannot suppose that his authority has served to gain it more readers. Having very judiciously laid it down as a general observation, that writers by studiously avoiding the fancied disgrace of imitation are apt

to fall into improper methods, forced conceits, and affected expression; he proceeds to introduce the work in question after the following manner. "And, that the reader may not suspect me of asserting this without experience, let me exemplify what has been here said in the case of a very eminent person, who, with all the advantages of art and nature that could be required to adorn the true poet, was ruined by this single error. The person I mean was Sir WILLIAM D'AVENANT, whose *Gondibert* will remain a perpetual monument of the mischiefs which must ever arise from this affectation of originality in lettered and polite poets."

A considerable degree of deference is undoubtedly due to a critic of such acknowledged taste and abilities; yet, since it appears to me that in this instance he writes under the influence of system and learned prejudice, I shall venture to canvass the principles upon which he supports his censure.

The *method* of Gondibert is first objected to by Dr. Hurd, and upon two accounts. First, that the compass of the poem is contracted from the limits of the ancient epic, to those of the dramatic form; and by this means, pursuing a close accelerated plot, the opportunity is lost of introducing digressive ornaments, and of giving that minute-

ness of description which confers an air of reality. Now, since the author sets out with disavowing the common rules of epic poetry, it is certainly unjust to try him by those rules. That effects are not produced which he never designed to produce, can be no matter of blame; we have only to examine the justness of the design itself. It is wrong to expect incompatible qualities as well in compositions as in men. A work cannot at the same time possess force and diffusiveness, rapidity and minuteness.

Every one who has read Homer without prejudice, will, I doubt not, confess that the effects which should result from the great events of the story are much broken and impeded by that very minuteness of description, and frequency of digression, which D'avenant is blamed for rejecting. The mind, warmed by an interesting narration, either in history, poetry, or romance, requires the writer to keep up with its exertions, and cannot bear him to flag in his pace, or turn aside in pursuit of other objects. The proper end of epic poetry, according to Dr. Hurd, is *admiration*. This, I imagine, would by no means have been allowed by our author, who seems rather to have placed it in interesting the passions, inculcating noble sentiments, and informing the understanding. Nor does it answer the idea of Horace,

who praises Homer for his moral lessons, for teaching

—— quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non.

However, a due limitation of subject, and something of rapidity in pursuing it, appear very necessary to the production of a considerable effect, of what kind soever; and a pompous display of foreign circumstances must always debilitate more than adorn. It appears an extremely bad compliment to an epic poem, to say that its chief beauty lies in the episodes. Indeed, epic poetry as existing in the models of antiquity, or their copies, by no means, I think, deserves the title given by critics, of the highest species of poetical composition. The tedious compass of the subject, the necessity of employing so large a share of the work in the relation of trifling occurrences for the sake of connection, and the frequency of interruptions from collateral matter, inevitably cause both the poet's exertions and the reader's attention to intermit; and it is no wonder that Homer and Virgil too sometimes nod over their labors. The author of Gondibert seems to have been sensible of these inconveniences, and, upon fair comparison of the epic and dramatic form, to have preferred the latter as capable of more spirit, and uniform dignity. We shall find, however, in reviewing

the poem, that he has by no means restricted himself so narrowly as to preclude all ornamental deviations; and though they may not deserve the title of episodes, yet in his short and unfinished piece, they have all the desirable effect of a pleasing variety.

The second objection which Dr. Hurd brings against the *method* of this poem, is the rejection of all supernatural agency, or what constitutes the *machinery* of the ancient epic poem. But, for this, the critic himself offers a vindication, when he commends the author for not running into the wild fables of the Italian romancers, "which had too slender a foundation in the serious belief of his age to justify a relation to them." Now by making this *belief* an essential rule of propriety with respect to the machinery, an author in an enlightened period, such as that of D'avenant, is, in effect, prohibited from its use altogether; for the abstracted nature of a pure and philosophical religion renders it utterly unfit for the purposes of poetical fiction. The works of such Christian poets as have attempted to form a system of machinery upon the ideas of saints, angels, and tutelary spirits, will sufficiently prove that their religion, even with a mixture of popular superstition, was ill calculated to assist their imagination. Two writers, whom one would little expect to

meet upon the same ground, Sir Richard Blackmore and Voltaire, have given instances of the same faulty plan in this respect; and nothing in the good Knight's epic labors can more deserve the attack of ridicule, than the divine mission in the Henriade for instructing his Majesty in the sublime mysteries of transubstantiation.

It was a very just charge which Plato brought against Homer, that he had greatly contributed to debase religion by the unworthy and absurd representations he has given of the celestial beings, both with respect to their power and their justice; and this is a fault which the poet must always in some measure be guilty of when he too familiarly mixes divine agency with human events. Nor does it appear more favorable to the greatness of the human personages, that they are on all occasions so beholden to the immediate interposition of divine allies. The refined and judicious Virgil, though he has tolerably kept up the dignity of his Deities, has yet very much lowered his heroes from this cause. When we see Æneas, the son of a Goddess, aided by a God, and covered with celestial armour, with difficulty vanquishing the gallant Turnus, we conclude that without such odds the victory must have fallen on the other side. Under such a system of supernatural agency, there was no other way of exalting a man than

making him, like Diomed, war against the Gods, or, like Cato, approve a cause which they had unjustly condemned. Surely a "*sober* intermixture of religion" can never be attributed to the ancient epic. The poem of Gondibert is, indeed, without all this mixture of religious machinery, whether it be termed sober or extravagant. Human means are brought to accomplish human ends; and Cowley, in his recommendatory lines prefixed to the work, has thus expressed his approbation of this part of the plan:

> Methinks heroick poesie till now
> Like some fantastique fairy-land did show;
> Gods, Devils, Nymphs, Witches, and Giants' race,
> And all but Man, in man's best work had place.
> Thou, like some worthy Knight, with sacred arms
> Dost drive the Monsters thence, and end the charms:
> Instead of these dost Men and Manners plant,
> The things which that rich soil did chiefly want.

We shall see hereafter that the author has not neglected to introduce *religious sentiment*, and that of a more noble and elevated kind than can easily be paralleled in poetry.

But as the poet, in the critic's opinion, did too much in banishing every thing supernatural in the events, so he did too little in retaining the fantastic notions of love and honor in the characters of his piece, which were derived from the same source of fiction and romance. There is, however,

an essential difference between the cases. Artificial sentiments, however unnatural at first, may, from the operation of particular causes, become so familiar as to be adopted into the manners of the age. Instances of fashion in sentiment are almost as frequent as of fashion in dress. It is certain that the romantic ideas of love and honor did in fact prevail in a high degree during a considerable period of the later ages, owing to causes which the same ingenious critic has in a very curious manner investigated, in his *Letters on Chivalry and Romance.* They gave the leading tone to all polished manners; and gallantry was as serious a principle in the Italian courts, as love to their country in the states of Greece or old Rome. Supernatural agency in human events, on the other hand, however commonly pretended, or firmly believed, would never approach one step nearer to reality. After all, the author of Gondibert could not intend to reduce his poem to mere history; but he chose to take a poetical license in the dignity and elevation of its sentiments, rather than in the marvelousness of its events. He thought he might attribute to the exalted personages of courts and camps the same nobleness of mind which himself, a courtier and a soldier, possessed. If his work be allowed less grand and entertaining from the want of such ornaments as those of

his predecessors are decorated with, it will yet be difficult to show how, at his time, they could have been applied consistently with good sense and improved taste.

So much in vindication of the general *method* of Sir W. D'avenant's poem. With respect to its *execution*, the justice of Dr. Hurd's censure cannot be controverted. That his sentiments are frequently far-fetched and affected, and his expression quaint and obscure, is but too obviously apparent; and these faults, together with the want of harmony in versification, will sufficiently account for the neglect into which the work is fallen, though interesting in its story, and thick-sown with beauties. Readers who take up a book merely for the indolent amusement of a leisure hour, cannot endure the labor of unharbouring a fine thought from the cover of perplexed expression. The pleasure arising from a flowing line or a rounded period is more engaging to them, because more easily enjoyed, than that from a sublime or witty conception. The author's faulty *execution*, however, arose from a source directly contrary to the "dread of imitation." Imitation itself led him to it; for almost all the models of polite literature existing in his own country, and indeed in the other polished nations of Europe, were characterised by the very same vitiation of

taste. Among our own writers it is sufficient to instance Donne, Suckling and Cowley for this constant affectation of wit and uncommon sentiment, and for a consequent obscurity of expression. Yet all these, and Sir W. D'avenant, perhaps, in a more eminent degree than the rest, had for great occasions, above the temptation of trifling, a majestic and nervous simplicity both of sentiment and expression; which, with our more refined taste and language, we have never been able to equal.

I should now hope that the reader would set out with me upon a nearer inspection of this poem, with the general idea of its being the work of an elevated genius, pregnant with a rich store of free and noble sentiment, fashioned by an intimate commerce with the great world, and boldly pursuing an original but not an unskilful plan.

The measure chosen for this poem is that which we now almost confine to elegy. This choice does not appear very judicious; for although our elegiac stanza possesses a strength and fulness which renders it not unsuitable to heroic subjects, yet in a piece of considerable length, every returning measure must become tiresome from its frequent repetitions. And this is not the worst effect of returning stanzas, in a long work. The necessity of comprising a sentence within the limits of the measure is the tyranny of Procrustes

to thought. For the sake of a disagreeable uniformity, expression must constantly be cramped or extenuated. In general the latter expedient will be practised, as the easiest; and thus both sentiment and language will be enfeebled by unmeaning expletives. This, indeed, in some measure is the effect of rhyme couplets; and still more of the Latin hexameter and pentameter. In our author, a redundancy of thought, running out into parentheses, seems to have been produced, or at least encouraged, by the measure. But I think he has generally preserved a force and majesty of expression.

It would have been highly injudicious for one who has rejected all poetical machinery, to have begun his poem with the ancient form of invoking a Muse. Indeed, in all modern writers this invocation appears little better than an unmeaning ceremony, practised by rote from ancient custom; and very properly makes a part of the *receipt for an epic poem* humorously laid down after the exact model of mechanical imitation, in the Spectator. Our author, with simple and unaffected dignity, thus opens at once into his subject:

> Of all the Lombards, by their trophies known,
> Who sought fame soon, and had her favour long,
> King Aribert best seem'd to fill the throne,
> And bred most business for heroic song.

This conquering monarch, we are soon acquainted, was blest with an only child, the heroine of the story,

> Recorded Rhodalind! whose high renown
> Who miss in books not luckily have read;
> Or vex'd with living beauties of their own
> Have shunn'd the wise records of lovers dead.

Descriptions of female beauty have engaged the powers of poets in every age, who have exhausted all nature for imagery to heighten their painting; yet the picture has ever been extremely faint and inadequate. Our poet judiciously confines his description of Rhodalind to the qualities of her mind, contenting himself with general praises, though in the high-flown gallantry of the times, of her personal charms.

> Her looks like empire shew'd, great above pride;
> Since pride ill counterfeits excessive height:
> But nature publish'd what she fain would hide,
> Who for her deeds, not beauty, lov'd the light.
>
> To make her lowly mind's appearance less,
> She us'd some outward greatness for disguise;
> Esteem'd as pride the cloyst'ral lowliness,
> And thought them proud who even the proud despise.

> Oppressors big with pride, when she appear'd
> Blush'd, and believ'd their greatness counterfeit;
> The lowly thought they them in vain had fear'd;
> Found virtue harmless, and nought else so great.

Her mind (scarce to her feeble sex a-kin)
Did as her birth, her right to empire show;
Seem'd careless outward when employ'd within;
Her speech, like lovers watch'd, was kind and low.

The court of Aribert could not want men of high rank and accomplishments to pay their devotions at such a shrine. Amongst these, "Oswald the Great and greater Gondibert" moved in the most exalted sphere of renown. These noble personages are characterized and contrasted with so masterly a hand that it would be an injury not to transcribe the whole.

In court Prince Oswald costly was and gay,
Finer than near vain kings their fav'rites are;
Outshin'd bright fav'rites on their nuptial day;
Yet were his eyes dark with ambitious care.

Duke Gondibert was still more gravely clad,
But yet his looks familiar were and clear;
As if with ill to others never sad,
Nor tow'rds himself could others practise fear.

The Prince could porpoise-like in tempests play,
And in court storms on shipwreck'd greatness feed;
Not frighted with their fate when cast away,
But to their glorious hazards durst succeed.

The Duke would lasting calms to courts assure,
As pleasant gardens we defend from winds;
For he who bus'ness would from storms procure,
Soon his affairs above his manage finds.

Oswald in throngs the abject people sought
With humble looks; who still too late will know
They are ambition's quarry, and soon caught
When the aspiring eagle stoops so low.

The Duke did these by steady virtue gain;
Which they in action more than precept taste;
Deeds shew the good, and those who goodness feign
By such even through their vizards are outfac't.

Oswald in war was worthily renown'd;
Though gay in courts, coarsely in camps could live;
Judg'd danger soon, and first was in it found;
Could toil to gain what he with ease did give.

Yet toils and dangers through ambition lov'd,
Which does in war the name of virtue own:
But quits that name when from the war remov'd,
As rivers theirs when from their channels gone.

The Duke (as restless as his fame in war)
With martial toil could Oswald weary make,
And calmly do what he with rage did dare,
And give so much as he might deign to take.

Him as their founder cities did adore;
The court he knew to steer in storms of state;
In fields a battle lost he could restore,
And after force the victors to their fate.

Of these great rivals, Gondibert was he whom the king had destined for his son-in-law, and the heir of his throne; and Rhodalind too, in the privacy of her own breast, had made the same choice. This is related in a manner little inferior to Shakespeare's famous description of concealed love.

Yet sadly it is sung that she in shades
Mildly as mourning doves love's sorrows felt;
Whilst in her secret tears her freshness fades,
As roses silently in lymbecks melt.

Gondibert, however, though of a nature by no means unsusceptible of the tender passion, had not as yet felt it for a particular object; and Oswald, who stood forth as the public suitor to the princess, was incited by no other motive than ambition. Not Rhodalind herself (says the Poet)

> Could he affect but shining in her throne.

His cause was powerfully pleaded with the princess by his sister Gartha, with whom we are next brought acquainted. A bold, full, majestic beauty; and a corresponding mind, high, restless, and aspiring, are her distinguishing features. The Prince and Duke were urged on to ambitious pursuits by their respective armies, which, just returned from conquest, lay encamped, the one at Brescia, and the other at Bergamo. That of Gondibert was composed of hardy youth whom he had selected from his father's camp, and educated in martial discipline under his own inspection. Temperance, chastity, vigilance, humanity, and all the high virtues of chivalry, remarkably distinguish these young soldiers from those of later times. Beauty, indeed, commanded no less regard amongst them than in a modern camp; but it was an object of passion, and not of appetite; and was the powerful engine in their education which inspired them with noble and exalted sentiments. This is

an idea on which our author, true to the principles of chivalry, very frequently enlarges, and always with peculiar force and dignity. In the present instance it is thus finely expressed:

But tho' the Duke taught rigid discipline,
He let them beauty thus at distance know;
As priests discover some more sacred shrine,
Which none must touch, yet all to it may bow.

When thus as suitors mourning virgins pass
Thro' their clean camp, themselves in form they draw,
That they with martial reverence may grace
Beauty, the stranger, which they seldom saw.

They vayl'd their ensigns as it by did move,
Whilst inward, as from native conscience, all
Worship'd the poet's darling god-head, Love;
Which grave philosophers did Nature call.

Indeed, the influence of this passion in its purest and most exalted state, during the course of education, is a subject that might, perhaps, shine as much in the hands of a moralist as of a poet.

The soldiers of Oswald were his father's brave veterans, in whose arms he had been bred. The story thus opened, and our attention awakened to the expectation of important events, the first canto is closed.

The second canto introduces us to a solemn annual hunting, held by Duke Gondibert in commemoration of a great victory gained on this day

by his grandsire. His train was adorned by many gallant and noble persons, the friends of his family, and commanders in his army. The hunting, which is described with much poetical spirit, terminates in a combat. As Gondibert and his party are returning weary homeward, an ancient ranger hastily brings the tidings that Oswald, who had lain in ambush with a body of chosen horse, is advancing upon them. The Duke, rejecting all counsels of flight, prepares to receive his foes; and with an account of their principal leaders, and the order of their march, the canto concludes.

A parley between the chiefs now succeeds, in which the character of each is well preserved. Oswald warmly accuses his rival for usurping his claims on the princess and the kingdom. Gondibert defends himself with temper, and disavows all ambitious designs. The other disdains accommodation; and the conference ends in a generous agreement to decide their differences in single fight.

When every thing is prepared for the combat, Hubert, the brother of Oswald, steps forth with a general challenge to the opposite party. This is instantly accepted, and serves for a prelude to so many others, that a general engagement seems likely to ensue; when Oswald reproves their disobedient ardour: and, upon Hubert's insisting to

share his fate from the rights of brotherhood, it is at length decided that three persons of each party should enter the lists along with their generals. The duel then comes on, in the fourth canto; in which Oswald, Hubert, Paradine and Dargonet, are severally matched with Gondibert; Hurgonil, the lover of Orna, the Duke's sister; and Arnold and Hugo, generous rivals in Laura. Descriptions of battle are so frequent in epic poetry that scarcely any circumstances of variety are left to diversify them. Homer and his imitators have attempted novelty in the multiplicity of their combats by every possible variation of weapon, posture, and wound. They considered the human body with anatomical nicety; and dwelt with a savage pleasure upon every idea of pain and horror that studied butchery could excite. I shall leave it to the professed admirers of antiquity to determine under what head of poetical beauty such objects are to be ranged. The terrible is certainly a principal source of the sublime; but a slaughter-house or a surgery would not seem proper studies for a poet. D'avenant has drawn little from them. His battles are rendered interesting chiefly by the character and situation of the combatants. When Arnold, the favored lover of Laura, is slain by Paradine, Hugo, who had over-

thrown his antagonist, springs to avenge his rival, with these truly gallant expressions:

Vain conqueror, said Hugo then, return!
Instead of laurel which the victor wears
Go gather cypress for thy brother's urn,
And learn of me to water it with tears.

Thy brother lost his life attempting mine;
Which cannot for Lord Arnold's loss suffice;
I must revenge, unlucky Paradine!
The blood his death will draw from Laura's eyes.

We rivals were in Laura; but tho' she
My griefs derided, his with sighs approv'd,
Yet I, in love's exact integrity,
Must take thy life for killing him she lov'd.

His generosity, however, was fatal both to his foe and himself.

Hubert, disabled by a wound in his arm, is dishonored by receiving his life from his conqueror; upon which occasion the poet thus beautifully apostrophises:

O Honour, frail as life thy fellow flower!
Cherish'd and watch'd and hum'rously esteem'd,
Then worn for short adornments of an hour;
And is, when lost, no more than life redeem'd.

The two chiefs are still left closely engaging; and when Hurgonil approaches to assist his lord, he is warmly commanded to retire. At length, after many mutual wounds, Oswald falls.

The death of the Prince at the same time takes off all restraint from his party, and incites them to revenge. Led by the wounded Hubert, old Vasco, and Borgio, they attack the hunters, who, besides the fatigue of the chase, are represented as somewhat inferior in number. A furious battle, the subject of the fifth canto, now ensues. Gondibert shines forth in all the splendor of a hero. By his prowess his friends are rescued, and the opposite leaders overthrown in various separate encounters; and by his military skill the brave veterans of Oswald are defeated. The whole description of the battle is warm and animated.

In Gondibert's generous lamentation over the fallen, every heart must sympathize with the following pathetic tribute to the rival lovers:

Brave Arnold and his rival strait remove,
  Where Laura shall bestrew their hallow'd ground;
Protectors both, and ornaments of love;
  This said, his eyes out-wept his widest wound.

Tell her now these, love's faithful saints, are gone
  The beauty they ador'd she ought to hide;
For vainly will love's miracles be shown,
  Since lover's faith with these brave rivals dy'd.

Say little Hugo never more shall mourn
  In noble numbers, her unkind disdain;
Who now, not seeing beauty, feels no scorn;
  And wanting pleasure, is exempt from pain.

When she with flowers Lord Arnold's grave shall strew,
And hears why Hugo's life was thrown away,
She on that rival's hearse will drop a few,
Which merits all that April gives to May.

The Duke now draws off his remaining friends towards Bergamo: but on the journey, overcome by fatigue and loss of blood, he falls into a deadly swoon. His attendants, amidst their anxiety and confusion upon this event, are surprised, in the sixth canto, with the approach of a squadron of horse. This however proves to be a friendly body, led by old Ulfin; who, after recovering the Duke by a cordial, declares himself to have been a page to his grandsire, and gives a noble relation of the character and exploits of his great master. The rumor of Oswald's attack brought him to the relief of Gondibert; and we have a description, which will be thought too much bordering upon the ludicrous, of the strange confusion among his maimed veterans, who in their haste had seized upon each other's artificial limbs. This unsightly troop, with the deficiences of hands, arms, legs and eyes, can scarcely, with all the poet's art, be rendered a respectable object. Such instances of faulty judgement are frequent in the writings of an age which was characterized by vigor of imagination rather than correctness of taste. Ulfin leads the Duke to the house of the sage Astragon,

where, with the approach of night, the canto and the first book conclude.

In the beginning of the second book, the poet carries us with Hurgonil and Tybalt and their noble dead, to Verona. The distant turrets first appearing, and then the great objects opening, one by one; the river, the palace, the temple, and the amphitheatre of Flaminius, form a landscape truly noble and picturesque. The view of the temple gives occasion to one of those elevated religious sentiments which dignify this poem:

> This to soothe heaven the bloody Clephes built;
> As if heaven's king so soft and easy were,
> So meanly hous'd in heaven, and kind to guilt,
> That he would be a tyrant's tenant here.

We have then a lively description of a city morning; with the various and uncertain rumors of the late event, among the people. The rest of the canto is employed in a debate, rather tedious, though intermixed with fine sentiments, concerning the propriety of granting funeral rites to those who had perished in the quarrel.

The progress of the fatal news is traced in the next canto. Aribert appears sitting in council in all the regal dignity. Tybalt relates the story. The king in a majestic speech complains of the toils and cares of empire, and predicts the baneful consequences likely to ensue. A more in-

teresting scene is then disclosed, in which Tybalt declares the melancholy events of the combat to Rhodalind and the other ladies of the court. Great art is shown in the delicate ambiguity by which they are prepared to receive the tidings. Laura is overpowered by her loss; and calling on Arnold's name, is conveyed away by her female attendants. This tender scene of sorrow is finely contrasted by the abrupt entrance of Gartha, in all the wild pomp of mingled rage and grief.

No sooner was the pity'd Laura gone,
But Oswald's sister, Gartha the renown'd,
Enters as if the world was overthrown,
Or in the tears of the afflicted drown'd.

Unconquer'd as her beauty was her mind,
Which wanted not a spark of Oswald's fire;
Ambition lov'd but ne'er to love was kind;
Vex'd thrones did more than quiet shades desire.

Her garments now in loose neglect she wore,
As suited to her wild dishevell'd hair.

In the fury of her passion she breaks out into execrations against the innocent.

Blasted be all your beauties, Rhodalind!
Till you a shame and terror be to sight;
Unwing'd be Love, and slow as he is blind,
Who with your looks poison'd my brother's sight!

At length she mounts her chariot, and flies with the wings of revenge to the veteran camp at

Brescia. The terror impressed on the people by her hasty departure is imaged with great sublimity.

> She seem'd their city's Genius as she pass'd,
> Who, by their sins expell'd, would ne'er return.

The third canto brings us to Brescia, where Hubert's arrival with the dead body of Oswald excites every emotion of surprise, grief and fury in the breasts of the brave veterans. They spend the night in this storm of contending passions; and at day-break assemble round the tent of Hubert, who by a noble harangue gives additional fire to their revenge. They instantly arm, and demand to be led to Bergamo; when Gartha arrives. She turns their vengeance against the court, where she represents the triumph of Gondibert's faction, and the dishonor cast upon their own. The rage discovered in her countenance, overpowering the symptoms of grief, is painted with amazing grandeur in the following simile:

> The Sun did thus to threat'ned nature show
> His anger red, whilst guilt look'd pale in all,
> When clouds of floods did hang about his brow;
> And then shrunk back to let that anger fall.

This tempest is, however, allayed in the next canto by the arrival of the wise Hermegild; who, though grown aged in war and politics, is possessed with a youthful passion for Gartha. He

solemnly binds his services to their party, for the reward of Gartha's love; but persuades them to submit to more cautious and pacific measures. Gartha returns with him to the court; and the funeral of Oswald with Roman rites, "Which yet the world's last law had not forbid," is described in the remaining part of the canto.

From scenes of rage and tumult the poet then leads us to the quiet shades of philosophy in the house of Astragon. This change is not better calculated for the reader's relief, than for a display of the richness and elevation of the writer's mind. That the friend of Hobbes should despise the learned lumber of the schools will not be thought extraordinary; but that he should distinctly mark out such plans of acquiring knowledge as have since been pursued with the greatest success, may well be deemed a remarkable proof of high and comprehensive genius. In Astragon's domain is a retired building, upon which is written in large letters, GREAT NATURE'S OFFICE. Here sit certain venerable sages, stiled *Nature's Registers,* busied in recording what is brought them by a throng called their *Intelligencers.* These men are diversly employed in exploring the haunts of beasts, of birds and of fishes, and collecting observations of their manners, their prey, their increase, and every circumstance of their œconomy. Near this place

is NATURE'S NURSERY, stocked with every species of plants, of which the several properties and virtues are diligently examined. Is it not striking to find in the *house of Astragon* so exact a model of the *school of Linnæus?*

We are next led to the CABINET OF DEATH; a receptacle for skeletons and anatomical curiosities of every kind: and from thence, by a pleasing analogy, to the library, or, as it is termed, the MONUMENT OF BANISH'D MINDS. The feelings of his guests on entering this room are thus described:

> Where, when they thought they saw in well sought books
> Th' assembled souls of all that men held wise,
> It bred such awful rev'rence in their looks
> As if they saw the bury'd writers rise.

The poet then goes through a particular survey of the authors, distinguished into their several periods, countries, and professions; in which he exhibits a great extent of learning, and, much more to his honor, a sound and liberal judgement of what is truly valuable in learning. Of this, his account of the polemic divines will be thought no unfavorable specimen.

> About this sacred little book did stand
> Unwieldy volumes, and in number great;
> And long it was since any reader's hand
> Had reach'd them from their unfrequented seat.

For a deep dust (which time does softly shed,
Where only time does come) their covers bear;
On which grave spiders streets of webs had spread,
Subtle, and slight, as the grave writers were.

In these heaven's holy fire does vainly burn,
Nor warms, nor lights, but is in sparkles spent:
Where froward authors with disputes have torn
The garment seamless as the firmament.

If the subjects of this canto appear more noble and elevated than those which usually employ the episodes of heroic poetry, that of the ensuing one must strike with still superior dignity. Having acquainted us with the philosophy of his admired sage, the poet now, by a beautiful kind of allegory, instructs us in his religion. Astragon had dedicated three temples, to PRAYER, to PENITENCE, and to PRAISE. The *Temple of Prayer* is described as a building quite plain, open, and without bells; since nothing should tempt or summon to an office to which our own wants invite us. The duty of *Penitence* being a severity unpleasing to nature, its *temple* is contrived, by its solemn and uncommon appearance, to catch the sense. It is a vast building of black marble, hung with black, and furnished with that "dim religious light" which poets have so finely employed to excite kindred ideas of gloom and melancholy: but none, I think, have painted it with such strength of colouring as our author:

Black curtains hide the glass; whilst from on high
A winking lamp still threatens all the room,
As if the lazy flame just now would die:
Such will the sun's last light appear at doom.

A tolling bell calls to the temple; and every other circumstance belonging to it is imagined with great propriety and beauty.

But the poet's greatest exertions are reserved for his favorite *temple of Praise.* A general shout of joy is the summons to it. The building in its materials and architecture is gay and splendid beyond the most sumptuous palace. The front is adorned with figures of all kinds of musical instruments; all, as he most beautifully expresses it,

That joy did e'er invent, or breath inspir'd,
Or flying fingers touch'd into a voice.

The statues without, the pictures within, the decorations, and the choir of worshippers, are all suited with nice judgement, and described with genuine poetry. This distinguished canto concludes with these noble stanzas, the sum and moral, as it were, of the whole.

Praise is devotion fit for mighty minds;
The diff'ring world's agreeing sacrifice;
Where heaven divided faiths united finds:
But Prayer in various discord upwards flies.

For Prayer the ocean is, where diversly
Men steer their course, each to a sev'ral coast;
Where all our interests so discordant be
That half beg winds by which the rest are lost.

By Penitence when we ourselves forsake,
'Tis but in wise design on piteous heav'n;
In Praise we nobly give what God may take,
And are without a beggar's blush forgiv'n.

Its utmost force, like powder's, is unknown;
And tho' weak kings excess of Praise may fear,
Yet when 'tis here, like powder, dangerous grown,
Heav'n's vault receives what would the palace tear.

The last thought will be termed, in this cold age, a conceit; and so may every thing that distinguishes wit and poetry from plain sense and prose.

The wonders of the *House of Astragon* are not yet exhausted.

To Astragon heaven for succession gave
One only pledge, and BIRTHA was her name.

This maid, her father's humble disciple and assistant, educated in the bosom of rural simplicity, is rendered a more charming object than even the renowned Rhodalind upon her throne.

Courts she ne'er saw, yet courts could have undone
With untaught looks and an unpractis'd heart;
Her nets the most prepar'd could never shun,
For Nature spread them in the scorn of Art.

But I check my desire of copying more from this exquisitely pleasing picture. My intention is to excite curiosity, not to gratify it. I hope I have already done enough for that purpose; and

since the rest of this unfinished story may be comprised in a short compass, I shall proceed, with but few interruptions, to conclude a paper already swelled to an unexpected bulk.

That the unpractised Birtha should entertain an unresisted passion for the noblest of his sex; and that Gondibert, whose want of ambition alone had secured him from the charms of Rhodalind, should bow to those of his lovely hostess and handmaid, will be thought a very natural turn in the story; upon which, however, the reader may foresee the most interesting events depending. The progress of their love, though scarcely known to themselves, is soon discovered by the sage Astragon. This is expressed by the poet with a very fine turn of a common thought.

> When all these symptoms he observed, he knows
> From Alga which is rooted deep in seas,
> To the high Cedar that on mountains grows,
> No sov'reign herb is found for their disease.

The remainder of this poem, consisting of a third book written during the author's imprisonment, is composed of several detached scenes, in which the main plot lies ripening for future action. Rivals are raised in Birtha. Flattering advances from the court, and more open declarations of love from Rhodalind, are in vain employed to assail the constancy of Gondibert. Various conflicts of

passion arise, and interesting situations, well imagined, and painted in lively colors. Much is given, as in the former parts, to the introduction of elevated sentiment; with one example of which I shall finish my quotations. Several well-born youths are placed about the person of Gondibert as his pages, whose education consists of the following great lessons from their lord.

But with the early sun he rose, and taught
These youths by growing Virtue to grow great;
Shew'd greatness is without it blindly sought,
A desperate charge which ends in base retreat.

He taught them Shame, the sudden sense of ill;
Shame, nature's hasty conscience, which forbids
Weak inclination ere it grows to will,
Or stays rash will before it grows to deeds.

He taught them Honour, Virtue's bashfulness;
A fort so yieldless that it fears to treat;
Like power it grows to nothing, growing less;
Honour, the moral conscience of the great.

He taught them Kindness; soul's civility,
In which, nor courts, nor cities have a part;
For theirs is fashion, this from falshood free,
Where love and pleasure know no lust nor art.

And Love he taught; the soul's stol'n visit made
Tho' froward age watch hard, and law forbid;
Her walks no spy has trac'd, nor mountain staid;
Her friendship's cause is as the loadstone hid.

He taught them love of Toil; Toil which does keep
Obstructions from the mind, and quench the blood;
Ease but belongs to us like sleep, and sleep,
Like Opium, is our med'cine, not our food.

The plot is at length involved in so many intricate and apparently insurmountable difficulties, that it is scarce possible to conceive a satisfactory termination. Perhaps the poet was sensible of a want of power to extricate himself, and chose thus to submit to a voluntary bankruptcy of invention, rather than hazard his reputation by going further. In his postscript, indeed, he excuses himself on account of sickness and approaching dissolution. However disappointed we may be by his abrupt departure from scenes which he has filled with confusion, we ought not to forget the pleasures already received from them. "If (says he to his reader, with more than the spirit of a dying man) thou art one of those who has been warmed with poetic fire, I reverence thee as my judge." From such a judicature, this NOBLE FRAGMENT would, I doubt not, acquire for him, what the critic laments his having lost, "the possession of that true and permanent glory of which his large soul appears to have been full *."

* *Disc. on Poetical Imitation.*

CRITICAL REMARKS

ON

DRYDEN'S FABLES.

THE collection of Poems, termed DRYDEN'S FABLES, chiefly consists of a miscellany of pieces, partly translations, partly paraphrases and improvements; the former from Homer and Ovid, the latter from Chaucer and Boccacio. The subjects of the first are too well known to readers of poetry to interest by their novelty: they make, therefore, no part of our present consideration, which is confined to those of the second class. The latter, indeed, in the common estimation, exclusively possess the claim of being regarded as the Fables or Tales of the admired Author, under which name no one understands pieces of mere classical translation. Though less original than perhaps is commonly supposed, the freedom with which the writer has intermixed his own language and sentiments, gives them all the air of origi-

nality, and they bear the decisive stamp of his genius.

The records of poetical composition afford few examples of mental exertion so remarkable as that which gave birth to these pieces. Dryden, who had from early life been an author by profession, was induced, either by motives of interest, or by the peculiar turn of his studies, to devote his poetical powers chiefly to the purposes of religious or political party. He had obtained great celebrity by his performances of this kind; of which the principal were "Absalom and Achitophel," a disguised satire referring to the state of politics in the court of Charles II.; and "The Hind and Panther," a dialogue in the form of fable, exhibiting the leading arguments employed by the Romish church against those who separated from it. To that church he had become a convert, when the accession of James II. to the throne inspired sanguine expectations of the recovery of its ancient predominance in the kingdom.

The revolution entirely overthrew these hopes, and at the same time gave an ascendancy to those popular principles of government, of which Dryden, during the two preceding reigns, had been the virulent oppugner. It was not, therefore, to be wondered at, how much soever it might be lamented, that the deposed laureat, at the advanced

age of sixty-eight, should be obliged to seek a subsistence from the exertion of his talents and industry. Among other engagements of the literary kind, he contracted with the booksellers for a volume of poems, to consist of a determinate number of lines, at a payment proportioned to that number.

Such was the mercantile transaction that produced his Fables,—a set of compositions in which his genius sports at ease, freed from the shackles of a political or polemical task; and which affords every species of poetical excellence that could be derived from long experience, joined with unabated vigor. The manner in which he speaks of his mental constitution at this period, though confident, is well justified by the accompanying proofs of his ability. "I think myself (says he) as vigorous as ever in the faculties of my soul, excepting only my memory, which is not impaired to any great degree; and if I lose not more of it, I have no great reason to complain. What judgement I had, increases rather than diminishes; and thoughts, such as they are, come crowding in so fast upon me, that my only difficulty is to choose or to reject." This account is so true, that perhaps no other example is to be met with, of the fruits of age partaking so much of the character of youth. The full tide and varied flow of

the verse, the copiousness and splendor of the descriptions, the vivacity of the sentiments, and abundance of the allusions, all indicate exuberance of fancy and unextinguishable fire; and instead of the languor of an ungrateful task, he exhibits the animation of one who practises a favorite amusement for his pleasure. He is still that luxuriant evergreen which his own beautiful lines in "The Flower and the Leaf" so aptly characterise:

> "Ev'n when the vital sap retreats below,
> Ev'n when the hoary head is hid in snow,
> The *life is in the leaf*, and still between
> The fits of falling snows, appears the streaky green."

Of the particular pieces in this volume, the author's favorite is evidently the heroic poem of PALAMON AND ARCITE, imitated from Chaucer, who, though not the inventor of the story, was Dryden's original. He has not scrupled in his preface to panegyrize it (Chaucer's poem) in terms which will scarcely bear to be weighed in the critical balance. Regarding it as a composition of the epic class, he compares it with the Iliad and Æneid, and affirms that "the story is more pleasing than [that of] either of them, the manners as perfect, the diction as poetical, the learning as deep and various, and the disposition full as artful."

This is high praise from one who knew what he was praising; but the critical opinions of Dryden are rather sentences formed for the occasion, than the well-weighed maxims of a consistent literary code. The *story* of Palamon and Arcite will, at best, bear a comparison with some episode in a legitimate epic: for a love-adventure will, I presume, in the judgement of few readers, stand in competition with the destruction of one potent empire, or the foundation of another.

In what sense the writer meant to assert the *perfection of its manners*, it is not easy to divine. Certainly, in the obvious one of giving a just representation of the age, country, and persons appertaining to the fable, nothing can be further from truth than this assertion. The manners in the Iliad are universally allowed to be the best authority we possess for the state of Greece in the early stage of its civilization. Those of the Æneid present a picture of the same kind, but, as framed upon imitation instead of observation, less correct. In Palamon and Arcite, the age of the rude half-savage hero, Theseus, is converted into the most splendid period of chivalry; such, indeed, as it exists in the fables of knight errantry, rather than as it ever formed a part of real history. Nothing can be more gross and glaring than this anachronism, to which the language and phraseo-

logy are moulded, as well as the manners and incidents.

Perhaps, however, Dryden only meant to say, that, after admitting this fiction as a poetical license, the assumed manners and characters of the piece will be found to be well preserved. I doubt, however, if much praise be due to the easy observance of consistency in portraitures marked with the uniformity which the artificial principles of chivalry necessarily produced. The duties of a loyal knight towards his liege lord, his mistress, and his antagonist, were laid down with as much precision as the rules of any monastic order, and as little permitted the deviations of particular tempers or opinions. If, in this story, Arcite is represented as the peculiar servant of Mars, and Palamon of Venus, they are both made equally susceptible of the amorous passion in its most fanciful and exquisite form, and equally ready to renounce all former ties of friendship, and fly to their swords in order to decide their respective claims. So exactly, indeed, are they balanced, that in the concluding combat, neither does Arcite gain, nor Palamon lose, any martial honor. The kings of Thrace and India, though studiously contrasted in their figures, exhibit no diversity in action, and are, indeed, useless for all purposes but those of parade. Emilia, the lady upon the

possession of whom the whole conduct of the fable turns, is a mere passive personage, contended for as a prize, without any interference of her own inclinations. In this respect she resembles the Lavinia of the Æneid; but the resemblance is of no advantage to the interest of the piece. During the long period of the story, she is passing several years of her prime apparently unnoticed and insignificant, though a transient glimpse of her charms was capable of inspiring such a romantic passion in her unknown lovers. Theseus is a feudal monarch, drawn with considerable dignity; but if generosity was intended to form part of his character, it is blemished by his resolution of keeping the two young knights prisoners for life, for no other crime than the defence of their country. This unfeeling rigor is aggravated by his detention of Palamon after he had consented to the liberation of Arcite; an incident, however, essentially connected with the events of the fable.

On the whole, the chief merit of this story consists in the copious fund it affords for various and splendid description; an advantage of which the poet has so well availed himself, that it will not be easy to name any work of its compass, ancient or modern, comparable to it in this respect. It keeps the imagination perpetually on the stretch with the rapid succession of its pictures, real and

allegorical, with the warmth and bustle of its action, and the gorgeous pomp of its scenery. Nor is it destitute of sentiments appropriate to the situations of the actors, and to the survey taken by a spectator of the passing events; for although the piece was originally composed in those ages which are considered as little favorable to the human understanding, yet it partakes largely of such learning and such philosophy as were then cultivated, and which, perhaps, have been treated with more contempt than they deserved.

The part of Dryden, in his renovation of this tale, is almost entirely confined to the language in which he has clothed it; for, not only are all its circumstances closely copied from Chaucer, but every ornamental addition, and even every moral reflection, is to be found in the work of the old bard, though often but rudely sketched or coarsely executed. Even the minute decorations of poetical diction are frequently transferred from the original; and whole lines are transcribed when the dialect and prosody permitted their insertion. Yet Dryden's merit in the piece will never be estimated at a low rate by one capable of feeling the charms of genuine poetry; for, perhaps, in no composition of the language is there more of that fire and energy which hurries the reader along, and makes him a sharer in every incident, or more of that

force and brilliancy of colouring which brings out every figure, and gives it the fullest effect. If we imagine a Raphael, or a Corregio, filling up the outlines of some early master, we may form a just conception of what the muse of Dryden has effected upon the draught of Chaucer. To the epic magnificence of diction he has joined a natural tone of expression, proceeding from the intermixture of common words and phrases, which is the characteristic of his style, and gives it a spirit hardly to be met with in that of any other poet.

Of the versification of this piece, it is enough to say, that it possesses every excellence for which the writer is so justly famed. The improvements upon the matter of the original are most conspicuous in the sentimental passages, where Dryden has frequently expanded a bare hint into a weighty and dignified sentence. Thus, where Theseus, terminating his long oration after the death of Arcite, says, in the bald simplicity of the ancient bard,

> " What may I conclude of this long serie
> But after sorrowe I rede us to be merie,
> And thanken Jupiter for all his grace?"

the modern rises in the following lofty strain:

> What then remains, but after past annoy,
> To take the good vicissitude of joy;
> To thank the gracious gods for what they give,
> Possess our souls, and while we live, to live?

In Palamon's address to Venus, Dryden has added to the short invocation of Chaucer, a very beautiful version of some celebrated lines of Lucretius in praise of the same goddess. Arcite's prayer to Mars is scarcely less improved, and opens with a tragic grandeur that finely contrasts with the softness and elegance of the former.

Many of the descriptive touches of the modern poet likewise greatly enhance the picturesque effect of the original paintings. Thus, when Palamon and Arcite first become enemies, the expression of their hatred is strongly marked to the sight by Dryden:

——— when they met, they made a surly stand,
And glar'd like angry lions as they pass'd.

Among many supposed representations in the temple of Venus, of too abstract a nature to be made manifest to the senses, which he has rather injudiciously copied from his original, he adds the *visible* forms of

——— issuing sighs that smok'd along the wall.

Chaucer's "porter Idleness" becomes a characteristic figure in the hands of Dryden:

Before the palace-gate, in careless dress,
And loose array, sat portress Idleness.

The "small houndes about the fete" of Diana are, by him, animated with the affections of their species,

And watch with upward eyes the motions of their queen.

Many more instances of similar embellishment might be cited; and indeed nothing less could be expected from such a master in his art, whose attention was solely occupied in beautifying and polishing a ready-furnished design.

In the tale of SIGISMONDA AND GUISCARDO, from Boccacio, he could derive no store of poetical imagery from his original, which is an unadorned narrative in prose; nor has he aimed at more than that middle style of verse which suits the relation of a domestic occurrence, and the eloquence of sentiment. Force and dignity of language, with singular clearness, are his characteristics in this story, which keeps close to the Italian author, both in the narrative and the sentimental part. In one point, indeed, Dryden has better consulted morals and decorum; which is, that he has made a secret marriage precede the accomplishment of the lovers' wishes; but, on the other hand, he has added so much warmth of coloring to the description, that decency cannot upon the whole be reckoned a gainer. Female delicacy, indeed, was a thing of which he never seems to have entertained a conception. The love here painted is simply what the French would call *amour physique;* a natural and allowable affection, it is true, but such as all writers, attentive to the preservation of mental purity, have studiously kept out of sight. Dry-

den, on the contrary, brings it to open view, without any veil to soften its features. The address of Sigismonda to her father after detection, the firm and dignified language of which gives it an air of elevation, almost incurs the charge of impudence, from the broad and undisguised confession of feelings which none but the loosest of the sex would avow.

The incidents of this story are, however, striking and pathetic, and the catastrophe is wrought with skill. The address of Sigismonda to her lover's heart in the vase, is copied from the Italian; but Dryden has not the excuse of Italian conceit for his extravagant line—

> My tears shall set thee first afloat within thy tomb.

The manner in which she sets about this duty to her lover's remains seems to require the serious application of the comic maxim, "Women, when they list, can weep." Dryden has, however, made it truly poetical by the beauty of his verses, and the simile of the "low-hung clouds." It were to be wished that his judgement had rejected the idea of "discharging her head" by the flow of tears, which gives an image rather medical than poetical. The parallel passage in Boccacio is worth copying, as it will afford an useful comparison between the writer in prose and the writer in verse.

"Et cosi detto, non ultramente che se una fonte d'acqua nella testa havuta havesse, senza fare alcun femminil romore, sopra la coppa chinatasi piangendo, comincio a versare tante lagrime, che mirabil cosa furono a riguardare, basciando infinite volte il morto cuore."

"Thus having spoken, as if there had been a fountain of water in her head, bending over the cup, without any feminine lamentation, she shed such an abundance of tears as was wonderful to behold, giving innumerable kisses to the dead heart."

The simplicity is certainly no diminution of the pathetic.

The Cock and the Fox; or, The Tale of the Nun's Priest, owes almost all its beauty, its learning, and its absurdity, to the original author, Chaucer. The fable, in which birds and beasts talk like school-men and divines, bespeaks the taste of the dark ages; a taste which Dryden had sanctioned by his "Hind and Panther." Ascribing to the inferior animals the speech and reason of men (the essence of fable) is already such a deviation from nature and truth, that an additional improbability costs little more to the imagination. It must be owned, however, that quotations from the philosophers and fathers have a whimsical effect in a dialogue between Chanticleer and Part-

let. The Latin passage, "Mulier est hominis confusio," so complaisantly interpreted to Partlet, is a piece of waggery literally copied from Chaucer; there is an inconsistency, however, in making her unacquainted with Latin, after she had quoted Galen and Cato, unless it be supposed, that Dame Partlet's learning, like Shakespeare's, was derived from translation.

The most striking parts of the description in this tale are taken from Chaucer with little addition or improvement: the lively pictures, for example, of the cock and the fox, are only new varnished by Dryden's versification. The humorous group of pursuers of the fox is Chaucer's, with the exception of the vicar, who is introduced with little propriety; and no advantage is gained by the more exaggerated terms in which their action is described by the modern poet. It is not in his natural, but in his intellectual paintings, that the superiority of Dryden appears with its proper lustre. Thus, the fine passage respecting the nature of dreams,

> Dreams are but interludes that fancy makes, &c.

is barely suggested by four simple lines of the original. He has displayed his theological skill in discussing more at length, and with more argumentative precision, the knotty point of predestina-

tion. It is observable, that he has superadded to the treacherous character of Reynard, the circumstance of religious hypocrisy; a vice he was always fond of lashing, both in season and out of season.

Like many other amusing fables, it has not much instruction to boast of. The most obvious moral deducible from it, is a warning against love of flattery. Chaucer to this has added the exposure of one

> That jangleth when that he should hold his peace,

alluding to the folly of the fox, who gives the cock an opportunity of escaping, by opening his mouth to make a speech: but this purpose is overlooked or rejected by Dryden.

In none of these tales does the genius of the poet break out with more splendor that in that of THEODORE AND HONORIA, from Boccacio. Exclusive of the names, which are different in the Italian author, his narrative is exactly followed by Dryden, who is an inventor only in the picturesque touches with which he has animated the recital. The story in itself is, indeed, highly impressive, and full of that romantic wildness which seizes on the imagination; but the effect is greatly enhanced by the art of the poet, who has improved every circumstance that might contribute to the leading emotion, that of terror. The manner in which he prepares the reader for the first appear-

ance of the horrid phantom cannot be too much admired:

Whilst listening to the murm'ring leaves he stood, &c.

The singular happiness of the versification in the lines descriptive of the sudden calm and pause in nature, previous to the whirlwind which ushered in the apparition, has attracted the notice of various critics, and must be felt by every ear sensible to the harmony of poetry. The figures of the flying maid, the hell-hounds, and the infernal huntsman, are drawn with wonderful force; but it must be acknowledged that no small part of the praise belongs to the original, which has sketched the same objects in a very spirited manner. The passage is worth quotation. "Vide venire per un boschetto asai folto d'arbuscelli e di pruni, correndo verso il luogo dove egli era, una bellissima giovane ignuda, scapigliata e tutta graffiata dalle frasche e dai pruni, piagnendo e gridando forte merce; e oltre a questo le vide a fianchi due grandissimi e fieri mastini, liquali duramente appresso correndole spesse volte crudelmente dove la giungevano, la mordevano; e dietro allei vide venire sopra un corsiere nero un cavalier bruno forte nel viso crucciato con uno stocco in mano, lei di morte con parole spaventevoli e villane minacciando."

"He saw, issuing from a thicket overgrown

with bushes and thorns, and running towards the place where he was, a very beautiful damsel, naked, with dishevelled hair, and all torn with the briars and brambles, wailing and crying aloud, "Mercy!" And he further saw at her flanks two great and fierce mastiffs, which running close after her, frequently reached and cruelly bit her: behind them he saw riding upon a black courser a dark-complexioned cavalier, with fury in his countenance, and a drawn sword in his hand, threatening her with death in terrible and injurious terms."

Dryden has with good effect made the damsel's cry for mercy correspond with the bite of the dogs, and added the superstition of the relief produced by invoking the name of Heaven. The picture of the knight, too, is finely heightened by the line,

> With flashing flames his ardent eyes were fill'd,

and by the action of cheering his dogs to the chase.

It is a proof of the poet's extraordinary powers, that he has been able to make the second representation of the visionary scene scarcely less impressive than the first; it is aided, indeed, by the contrast of the splendid feast preceding it, and by the presence of Honoria herself to witness it. Dryden has much enlarged upon the original in describing the operation of the tremendous spectacle on the lady's mind, according to his usual

practice of dwelling diffusely upon circumstances of mental affection. Her looking back at every noise, and starting as if she heard

——— the horseman-ghost come thund'ring for his prey,

are strokes of nature. The lesson of the tale was probably the least part of the concern of either writer. Its coarse conclusion in Dryden is entirely his own.

The Flower and the Leaf, or, The Lady in the Arbour, a vision, from Chaucer, possesses in the original that degree of descriptive splendor, which limits the merit of the modern poet to little more than improved diction and harmonious versification. The very beautiful introductory picture of spring, as influencing the vegetable creation, is, however, Dryden's own, and displays the power of a master to throw novelty upon a trite subject. The progress of the buds, which at first shrink from the cold blast, and stand "doubting at the door of life," till at length, filled with the genial spirit, they expand to the sun, and breathe out their souls of fragrance, is delineated with exquisite fancy and elegance.

The scenery of this vision is not less gorgeous than that of the Knight's Tale; and, like it, derives most of its brilliancy from the costume of chivalry. Dryden seems to riot in description of

this kind, which he decorates with all the pomp and pride of his verse. He professes, however, to have been attracted to this tale principally by its moral, which consists in extolling active virtue and fortitude in comparison with inglorious ease and self-indulgence. Yet the allegory is confused and obscure, and little interest is attached to the action or actors.

There is no hint in Chaucer of the fairy system adopted by Dryden for the personages in the pageant, and which somewhat resembles the machinery in the Rape of the Lock. Chaucer, indeed, supposes them to have had a prior existence, and identifies some of them as the Nine Worthies, the knights of the Round Table, the "Douseperis" (twelve peers of Charlemagne), &c.; but he does not concern himself to account for their appearance on the present occasion. So far, therefore, the fiction is improved by the modern poet.

Dryden has fallen into a singular inadvertence in giving *bows* to Arthur's knights, in which he finds an emblematical propriety,

> For bows the strength of brawny arms imply.

The original, it is true, speaks of their "baring bowes in their hand," but these are only the laurel *boughs* mentioned in the beginning of the description, disguised under a different orthography.

The comparison between the qualities of the leaf and of the flower is wrought by Dryden with much beauty, and the moral is well pointed; yet the fable upon the whole partakes of the languor usually attached to allegory, and probably will to most readers appear the least entertaining in the collection, though certainly not the least poetical.

The keen and lively sarcasm against the priesthood with which the WIFE OF BATH'S TALE opens, is found in the original author, Chaucer: but it so well suited the disposition of his modernizer, that he has given it with enlargements. The "midnight parson posting o'er the green with gown tucked up to wakes" is a figure of his own invention, by which he doubtless meant to extend his satire to the clergy of his own time; but he did not reflect that the same person could not consistently sustain the part of Chaucer's friar, who "bids his beads both even-song and morn."

The subsequent story is related by Dryden in a paraphrastical manner, with free license of invention. One of his added passages is remarkable, as it alludes to that species of apology for his own licentiousness in writing, which the attacks of Collier and others had forced from him.

> Then courts of kings were held in high renown,
> Ere made the common brothels of the town:

There virgins honourable vows receiv'd,
But chaste as maids in monasteries liv'd:
The king himself, to nuptial ties a slave,
No bad example to his poets gave:
And they, not bad but in a vicious age,
Had not, to please the prince, debauch'd the stage.

At this time he was, indeed, if not cured by age and reflection of his propensities, yet awed into some regard for decorum; and he has taken credit in his preface for abstaining from versifying Chaucer's prologue to this very tale, which was afterwards one of Pope's juvenile exercises.

The story of Midas, introduced by the way of illustration, is enlivened with some humorous strokes, not very reverential to royalty; for Dryden, though accustomed to use the language of the most obsequious courtier, appears in his heart to have regarded the distinctions of rank and birth, as they will always be looked upon by the man who is conscious of possessing, in his own mind, something intrinsically superior to both.

In the progress of the tale, after the beldam has agreed with the knight to furnish him with a solution of the queen's question, Dryden adds a circumstance of which there is no vestige in the original. He makes her spread her mantle on the ground, and seat the knight and herself upon it, when they are conveyed with a wish to King Arthur's court. This fiction, apparently borrowed

from the Arabian Nights, is not unsuitable to the fairy machinery on which the tale is founded; yet it seems to injure the final effect, by anticipating supernatural powers, which should have remained concealed from the knight till the concluding trial of his obedience.

The "long sermon," as Dryden justly calls it, of the bride on the wedding night, is greatly amplified by the modern writer, particularly with respect to the topic of nobility. As this is also discussed at length in the story of Sigismonda and Guiscardo, he has thought it necessary to apologize in his preface for the repetition, which he imputes to the failure of his memory. In the present instance he has borrowed some thoughts from Juvenal, an author with whom he was familiar as a translator. The beautiful metaphor in which nobility is termed

——— a long trail of light to thee descending down,

is the product of his own fancy.

The tale of CYMON AND IPHIGENIA, from Boccacio, begins with an apologetical preface, in which the poet, in his own name, defends himself from the "severe divine" who had inveighed against the licentiousness of his verse, and retorts upon him in a way that displays more irritation than penitence. His praise of virtuous love,

however, is equally just and noble, and forms a suitable prelude to a story, of which the animating effects of that passion are the subject.

All the incidents of the tale, as well as many of the descriptive beauties, are copied from the Italian. The natural circumstance of Cymon's quarter-staff, which appears truly English, is taken from the "bastone in collo" of Boccacio; but the happy line,

He whistled as he went for want of thought,

is Dryden's addition. In the picture of the sleeping nymph he has exerted his utmost skill; and every reader sensible to the charms of versification, will admire the lines in which the "fanning wind" and the "rising bosom" are so melodiously alternated. The apt simile of the light running through chaos, by which the sudden effect of love upon the sluggish soul of Cymon is illustrated, is original in our poet; yet it might have been suggested by the

"Ignea rima micans percurrit lumine nimbos"

of Virgil. That of the pilgrim who

——— stands with awful eyes to watch the dawn of day,

is another of his poetical contributions.

His propensity to exaggerate in all his paintings has led him too much to multiply epithets denoting the stupidity of the new lover, such as "the man-

beast," "the fool of nature," "the slavering cudden." The miracle of creating sense in an absolute idiot is too great for even love to effect; and the more modest wonder of rousing to action the latent seeds of intellect, affords sufficient scope for the encomiast of that passion. This, indeed, is the light in which the change produced in Cymon is afterwards viewed; for Dryden, varying a little from the poetical imagery of the original, thus describes the operation of the new agent in his soul:

> What then of alter'd Cymon shall we say,
> But that the fire which chok'd in ashes lay,
> A load too heavy for his soul to move,
> Was upward blown below, and brush'd away by love?

The subsequent events of the fable will not bear a rigorous examination in a moral view, since the sole maxim they inculcate is that every thing is lawful to lovers. The ladies are to determine how far Dryden has improved the story by representing Iphigenia as a willing prey to the ravishers, of which no symptom appears in the narration of Boccacio: it may, however, be presumed, that his habitual coarseness of sentiment, with respect to feminine attachments, will excite their displeasure, and that they will disavow the line

> She hugg'd th' offender, and forgave th' offence.

The modest Italian takes care to inform his reader, that Cymon lost his newly-gained Iphigenia,

"senza altro haverle tolto, che alcun bascio"—having taken nothing from her but a few kisses.

They who are acquainted with Dryden's manner and principles will not doubt that the lively satire on the "rude militia raw in fields" is all his own. When this is compared with what he has said of the regular soldiers of Tancred,

> Dangerous to freedom, and desir'd alone
> By kings who seek an arbitrary throne,

in which he doubtless alluded to the guards of King William, it will curiously exemplify the inconsistencies of a party spirit.

The sudden changes of fortune in this story render it interesting, though its bloody catastrophe is displeasing, and we feel a repugnance to ally the cause of Cymon with that of Lysimachus, which has no color of right or justice.

By way of atonement for his perpetual vein of satire against the clergy, Dryden has wrought with uncommon care his CHARACTER OF A GOOD PARSON, imitated and enlarged from that of Chaucer in the prologue to his Canterbury Tales. The features are essentially the same as those of the original; nor is there one truly pastoral virtue added to the draught of the ancient poet; but Dryden's has a more sanctified air, and is more conformable to the Roman catholic model. Chaucer is contented to praise the patience with which he sub-

mitted to indigent circumstances; while his imitator thinks it necessary to add the merit of voluntary abstinence: the first makes his parson charitable to the poor; the second represents him as renouncing every idea of property, and regarding all he received as part of the public store.

The beautiful similes and illustrations with which Dryden's portrait is interspersed, are his own, one excepted, which alludes to the superior degree of holiness required in the clerical character, thus expressed in the original:

> "And this figure he added yet thereto,
> That if gold rustes, what shuld iren do?"

The salvo for papal power, under the notion of the double reign of St. Peter's successor, is an offering paid by the convert to his new faith: Chaucer, addicted to the principles of Wickliffe, was not likely to give a sanction to Romish usurpation.

All the latter part of Dryden's piece is an addition, evidently referring to the nonjuring clergy under King William. It supports the doctrine of indefeasible right to the crown in the lineal heirs, and the consequent duty of subjects to conform to it:

> The title stood entail'd, had Richard had a son?

What he stigmatizes as "the senseless plea of right by providence," invented by "a flattering

priest," must allude to the injudicious defence of William's succession to the throne, by Bishop Burnet. Of this plea, Dryden justly observes, that it

> ——— lasts no longer than the present sway,
> But justifies the next who comes in play.

His picture of the priest after he had voluntarily quitted his benefice, extending, like a primitive apostle, his care of souls throughout the land, is highly interesting, and was probably drawn from the life. Whatever be thought of the judgement or consistency of the nonjuring clergy, it cannot be denied that some of them were bright examples of pious resignation under sufferings for conscience-sake.

Such are the varied contents of this noble production of Dryden's old age. At a similar late period of life, Milton wrote his Paradise Lost. The two works will bear no comparison in point of magnitude and grandeur; yet those beauties in detail, for which alone such a design as that of renovating and adorning ancient writings affords scope, are not less conspicuous in Dryden's Fables, than the higher qualities of poetry are in the masterpiece of Milton. All that at any time constituted the characteristic excellence of Dryden's muse, appears in full perfection in these autumnal fruits;

and it is impossible to conceive a time whilst English poetry shall continue to be cultivated, when the harmony of numbers and splendor of diction in these pieces, shall cease to inspire admiration and delight.

OBSERVATIONS

ON

POPE'S

ESSAY ON MAN.

OF the poems of Pope, none perhaps is more celebrated in popular fame, none has afforded more passages for storing in the memory, and applying on common occasions, than the ESSAY ON MAN. It cannot, therefore, be an uninteresting topic, to inquire what has given it such a share of the public approbation; and how its author has contrived to render it at the same time the favorite of the graver part, and the admiration of the more polished, of his readers.

This work is by the writer himself represented as a *short system of ethics*, which he might as well have composed in prose as in verse, had he not preferred the latter for two reasons;—one, that principles and maxims when versified are more impressive, and adhere more firmly in the memory; the other, that he was able to express himself with

more brevity in verse than in prose. With respect, then, to the subject itself, it appears that he did not select it on account of any peculiar fitness he discerned in it to become the groundwork of a poem; but that, having chosen it for another reason, he gave it the clothing of verse, as in his opinion the most advantageous. And this representation nearly coincides with the received fact, that the work was suggested to him by his friend, Lord Bolingbroke, who sketched out the plan, and furnished most of the materials, with the intention of ushering into the world a system of his own, decorated with the poetry of Pope. Bolingbroke had himself sufficient vigor of imagination and brilliancy of style to have written a prose essay which might engage the attention of persons fond of moral and philosophical speculation; but by judiciously borrowing the Muse of Pope, he has diffused his sentiments on these topics through all classes and ages of English literature; has made them familiar to our early and our mature conceptions; and stamped them in indelible characters on the language of the country. This conversion of a dry and argumentative subject into a splendid and popular one, is a miracle of the poetic art; and an inquiry into the means by which it has been effected will probably go far into the elucidation of that *essen-*

tial character of poetical composition which distinguishes it from prose.

On taking a survey of the Essay on Man for the purpose of marking and arranging its most striking passages, it will probably be found that they are reducible to three principal heads. 1st. A maxim, proposition, or sentence often occurs, presented in the naked simplicity of philosophical language, but so concentred by nervous brevity, and rounded by the harmonious structure of the verse, that it sinks into the mind with the same kind of force that a weighty and polished ball penetrates solid matter. It would be easy from every epistle to adduce examples of this excellence. Thus, speaking of the Deity, he says,

> To him no high, no low, no great, no small;
> He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all:

Of Man;

> The glory, jest, and riddle of the world:
> Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err:

Of Providence;

> All Nature is but Art unknown to thee;
> All Chance, Direction which thou canst not see;
> All Discord, Harmony not understood;
> All partial Evil, universal Good.

In this style most of the purely argumentative parts are written; and so superior was Pope to all other authors, whether in verse or prose, in this respect, that his sincere friend and admirer,

Swift, selects this faculty as his distinguishing excellence:

> "When Pope can in one couplet fix
> More sense than I can do in six;"

yet Swift himself was by no means a feeble or prolix writer. Now, as nothing comes more home to the minds of men in general, or is more universally congenial to the taste of readers, than a moral sentiment or religious truth forcibly and clearly expressed, it is probably to the copious admixture of passages of this kind that the Essay on Man is indebted for the greatest part of its popularity. These are the clauses of sterling weight and effect, which impress those who are little disposed to enter into a train of argumentation, or who have little sensibility to poetic beauties.

But the mere faculty of compressing sense into a small compass and putting it into harmonious measure, admirable as it is for the moral writer, goes but a short way in forming the poet. For this last character Pope is greatly indebted, 2dly, to that splendor of diction, which illuminates an intellectual truth by associating it with some kindred sensible object of the sublime or beautiful class. It is this which gives life and motion to language; and superadds to its simple purpose of conveying the requisite ideas, that of gratifying the imagination with a rapid succession of striking

figures. Scarcely any writer has surpassed Pope in this quality, which is indeed of the very essence of poetry. He studied it with all the assiduity of a professor of his art; and his critics and annotators have brought to light wonderful proofs of his attention to enrich his language with the spoils of all ages and countries. It is not easy to open this work at a single page which will not furnish examples of just and noble expressions of the figurative kind, serving to impart that vivid coloring to his diction which renders it so enchanting to the lover of poetry. Two or three examples will serve to illustrate my meaning.

Who knows but He, whose *hand* the lightning forms,
Who *heaves* old Ocean, and who *wings* the storms,
Pours fierce ambition in a Cæsar's mind,
Or *turns* young Ammon *loose* to *scourge* mankind?

Let Earth *unbalanc'd* from her orbit *fly*,
Planets and suns *run lawless* thro' the sky,
Let ruling angels from their spheres be *hurl'd*,
Being on being *wreck'd*, and world on world.

For him alone Hope leads from goal to goal,
And *opens* still and *opens* on his soul;
Till *lengthen'd on* to Faith, and unconfin'd,
It *pours* the bliss that fills up all the mind.

Oh while along the *stream* of Time thy name
Expanded flies, and *gathers* all its fame,
Say, shall my *little bark* attendant sail,
Pursue the *triumph*, and *partake* the *gale*?

It may be presumed unnecessary to point out more particularly the force of these *verba ardentia*, these "thoughts that breathe, and words that burn," to any one capable of relishing true poetry.

A third expedient employed by Pope to diversify and enliven his subject, is the introduction of little pictures and incidents by way of illustration, which are generally conceived with great happiness, and wrought with peculiar care. Of this kind is, the sportive lamb unconscious of his approaching fate; the Indian savage indulging his humble expectations of future existence; the enumeration by pride of the benefits of nature designed for Man; the progress of superstition; and the historical allusions to the vanity of human grandeur. These form an agreeable relief to the train of precept or argument, and essentially add to the *poetical* character of the work.

It is in this manner that an ethical treatise, in its transmission from the mind of a philosopher to that of a poet, has assumed a new dress, and has accommodated itself to a new set of readers; nor, perhaps, does the history of the art of poetry afford a clearer example of its powers and limits. Its *powers* have been, to render a subject, involved in system and argument, not only popular and familiar, but prolific of sublime and beautiful passages

which are become interwoven into the very body of national literature, and have given a tinge to national opinion: and after such a proof of ability, if Pope's title to the honors of a poet of the very first order be disputed, it can only be by those who have framed an artificial classification of poetic merits, in which they have placed at the head of the scale those efforts of pure imagination which are scarcely compatible with the noblest exertions of the understanding. The *limits* of the art, however, are almost as strongly marked in this performance, as its powers; for it is to a too pertinacious attempt of arguing in verse, and displaying all the acuteness of a philosophical disputant, that may be attributed the many prosaic lines, mean expressions, inaccuracies of construction, and defects in the mechanism of versification, which render this piece but an unfavorable specimen of that high polish and correctness which are supposed peculiarly to characterise the author, and which in some of his poems he has almost uniformly exhibited. Indeed, there are sufficient tokens that the work was undertaken as a task—that the writer was occasionally tired or bewildered in following his argument—and that the poet and system-builder did not always happily draw together: but these remarks lead to

the consideration of another topic, the proper subject or matter of this Essay.

Concerning the *system of ethics* contained in the Essay on Man, much has been written; and in particular, the learned prelate who undertook the office of editor to Pope's miscellaneous works has bestowed much pains upon it in the elaborate notes and commentary accompanying the text. But erudition and acuteness are not the only requisites of a good commentator. That conformity of sentiment which enables him fully to enter into the intention of his author, and that fairness of disposition which places him above every wish of disguising or misrepresenting it, are qualifications not less essential. In these points it is no breach of candor to affirm (since the public voice has awarded the sentence) that Dr. Warburton has in various of his critical labors shown himself extremely defective; and perhaps in none more than in those he has expended upon this performance; his manifest purposes in which have been, to give it a systematic perfection that it does not possess, to conceal as much as possible the suspicious source whence the author derived his leading ideas, and to reduce the whole to the standard of moral orthodoxy. So much is the sense of the poet strained and warped by these processes

of his commentator, that it is scarcely possible in many places to enter into his real meaning, without laying aside the commentary, and letting the text speak for itself.

Somewhat, however, of an analytical view of the subject and reasoning, connected by such a chain of method as is clearly deducible from the work itself, cannot but be useful by way of preparing the reader, who perhaps may be little conversant with argumentative topics, for comprehending it as a whole. And this I shall endeavour to supply by a prefatory sketch of the contents, drawn up with as much brevity as is consistent with the purpose in view.

The Essay on Man is divided into four epistles. Of these, the first peculiarly treats of Man with respect to the place he holds in the universe; and the principal topic is the refutation of all objections against the wisdom and benevolence of that providence which placed him here, derived from the weakness and imperfection of his nature. After a dignified exordium, in which the poet invites his friend to accompany him in a survey of the whole "scene of Man," with the final intention of justifying the ways of God towards him, (which is to be regarded as the general subject of the entire Essay)—he proceeds to some remarks on the impossibility of comprehending, with the

limited faculties of the human mind, the plan of Deity in framing the system of the universe; and he sets in strong contrast the omniscience of the Creator against the ignorance of the creature. Yet, in laying it down as a principle, that "we can reason only from what we know," he seems to invalidate some of his own conjectural arguments concerning that *order* of the universe which is to account for apparent partial defects. The leading idea running through this book, is that of a *scale of beings*, rising in due gradation one above another, all bearing a relation to the great whole, and each endowed with the faculties proper for its station. In such a scale, there must be such a being as Man; and there is, therefore, no more reason to wonder that he is not elevated higher, than that he is raised so high. That he is best fitted for the place he occupies, is attempted to be shown by various striking observations; and much lively correction is bestowed upon that pride which inclines us to believe the whole creation made for our use alone, and leads us rather to form vain wishes for unattainable perfections, than to accommodate ourselves to our present lot. After a very noble description of the divine attributes, and an exhortation to pious trust in an overruling Providence, the book concludes with asserting as a clear deduction from the whole, the great

axiom that *whatever is, is right.* That this conclusion is strictly warranted by the premises, and that the mode of proof is the best that could be devised in point of cogency and arrangement, will probably be called in question by logical reasoners; but the wonderful energy of some of the passages, and the poetical splendor of others, are so calculated for effect on the mind of the reader, that he must be cold indeed who does not rise from the perusal impressed and animated. Perhaps, if a person were called upon to exhibit an example of the utmost power of the English language in fulness, strength, and dignity of expression, he could not choose more happily than those lines near the close of this epistle in which the Deity is represented as the *soul of the universe.*

The second epistle begins with pointing out "the proper study of mankind," namely, themselves; yet it cannot be said that the bold contrast drawn between the powers of the human mind, on the one part, and its weakness, on the other, is highly encouraging. If Newton, with the wonderful reach of his intellectual faculties, were unable to "describe or fix one movement of his mind," what other man may hope for success in an investigation of his own nature? Notwithstanding, however, these sarcasms against human wisdom, apparently drawn from the school of Char-

ron, the poet proceeds seriously to the subject of his epistle; and having stated the *two principles* which rule over Man, *self-love* and *reason*, he goes on to show the character and office of each, and their opposition or concurrence in influencing human conduct. Self-love he calls the *moving principle* which excites to action, on which account it is made the strongest; reason is the *comparing* and *restraining* principle: the objects of the former are some immediate good; of the latter, some remote or consequential good. Both have the same general ends of attaining pleasure and avoiding pain. But surely this representation is inaccurate; for self-love and reason stand in no sort of oppposition to each other; and the second is rather an instrument employed by the first, the better to effectuate its ends, than a distinct principle of action. Reason is more properly opposed to the *passions*; which Pope justly terms *modes of self-love*, all having for their object some real or supposed good. These, he says, duly tempered and blended, give "all the strength and colour of our life." Adopting, however, the theory which he has more particularly opened in one of his moral epistles, he asserts the existence of a *master passion*, which swallows up the rest, and may be regarded as the innate disease of the mind, from every faculty of which it derives fresh nourish-

ment. Yet instead of attempting to eradicate this leading propensity, he advises to follow "nature's road," and content ourselves with keeping it in proper bounds; for our passions, and even vices, by means of due culture, are convertible into our surest virtues. The poet here admits that notion of the ancient moralists, which supposes the limits of virtue and vice to be blended in such a manner, as to render it impossible to say where one ends and the other begins; or rather, which makes every vice only the extreme of some virtue. Thus, that ruling passion which is in some instances our leading vice, is in others our leading virtue; and every Man is both virtuous and vicious in degree. He concludes with showing how, in the scheme of Providence, the different passions, propensities, follies and defects of Men, are all made to conspire to the general good —how the ties of mutual aid and interest are by their means drawn more closely—and how at length they reconcile Man to the loss of a being so full of imperfection. Finally, he enumerates the various kinds of happiness arising from the variety of Men's tempers and pursuits, and from the changes of object that accompany the different stages of life in each individual; and his inference from the whole matter is, that "though Man is a fool, God is wise." This book is not re-

markable for its poetical beauties. Its language is mostly that of argument and simple illustration, and the subject is pursued with scarcely any digression. Some of the concluding lines, however, are eminently beautiful; yet it is not easy to say what moral effect the author meant to produce by them. If Man's folly is equally conspicuous in all he does; if his weaknesses are made the instruments of his happiness; if "in folly's cup still laughs the bubble joy," and "not a vanity was given in vain," it would seem very fruitless to attempt by artificial wisdom to correct the designed and inherent defects of our nature.

The third epistle begins by assuming, as the result of what has preceded, "that the Deity acts to one end, though by various laws:" in other words, his aim is the production of general good, but by different, and sometimes apparently opposite, means; of which, instances have been given in the various passions and propensities of Mankind. The author next, in a superior strain of poetry, resumes a former topic, and shows how all the parts of nature, by an universal chain of connection, contribute to the advantage of each other, and of the whole. He again, likewise, by various striking examples, aims at mortifying that pride of Man which induces him to regard the whole creation as made for his sake alone; and

he exhibits the benefits which even the animals subjected to human dominion are made to derive from it. These reflections lead him to mark the limits between reason and instinct; and in various beautiful instances he exemplifies the operation of the latter principle, always exactly adapted to its purpose, and to nothing further. In Man, as in other animals, self-love, modified by instinct, is the origin of the conjugal and the parental connexion; but in the human creature, reason takes up, improves, and prolongs the union thus formed, and carries it on to be the foundation of all the charities of life. Hence the poet takes occasion to fall into a description of the earliest ages of Man, when he was yet in the *state of nature*, which he paints in all the pleasing colors usually appropriated to the golden age, and especially characterises by that kind of fellowship with the beasts which made them "joint tenants of the shade," and forbad the slaughtering of animals for food or sacrifice. The next stage was that in which *art* gradually arose, the first efforts of which are attributed to imitation of the instinctive manners and actions of brutes. These ideas of the author will probably appear rather poetical than philosophical, and confirmed neither by history nor analogy. He speculates with more probability when he proceeds to the rise of so-

cieties and governments; when he describes the progress from patriarchs to kings, and displays the origin of a pure and simple theism, deduced either from reason or tradition, and which represented the Deity as an object of love, not of fear. This happy state of things was at length subverted by force, which introduced the law of tyrants and supported itself by a league formed with that superstition which now began to take place of primitive religion. The origin and effects of this debasing principle are described by Pope with all the poetic fire of Lucretius, directed and concentrated by his own nervous sense. He then shows, how the same self-love which nourishes the inordinate lust of power in an individual, operates on the general body, to check and control it. Thus are formed those generous spirits who employ themselves in endeavours to instruct and enlighten mankind; and in this manner the jarring interests of individuals unite to produce the harmony of the whole. The conclusion is, that in the comprehensive scheme of Providence, self-love and the social principle are the same. This book is highly poetical. Dwelling more upon illustration than reasoning, it has drawn from a variety of sources pictures of beauty and sublimity, colored with all the splendor of language proper to the author. Its sentiments,

too, are elevated and generous; and though the accuracy of some may be disputed, the effect of the whole is in unison with the best feelings of the heart.

The fourth epistle opens with an eloquent address to happiness, the search after which is its interesting subject. The poet, after finding that happiness is fixed to no one spot or condition of life, soon comes to the conclusion that it belongs equally to all. He finds, too, that a man cannot be made happy without the participation of others; and therefore, "happiness subsists not in the good of one, but of all." Order, "Heaven's first law," has made differences of rank and endowments among mankind necessary; but it does not thence follow that there must be the same inequality in point of happiness. The essential goods of life are all included in "health, peace, and competence," of which the two former consist with virtue alone. The gifts of fortune belong equally to the good and bad, but the former are best qualified to enjoy them. These positions lead the author to a very feeling eulogy on virtue, the influence of which in bestowing bliss is such, that there was no necessity of exempting the good man from the common ills of life, or of elevating him to a superiority of condition. This strain of reasoning is succeeded by a splendid amplification of the philosophical

doctrine, that honor and shame arise from no particular station, but that all true glory proceeds from well filling the allotted part, whatever it may be. The poet pursues difference of fortune through all the circumstances of title, birth, rank, fame, and parts; and proves, by a variety of illustrious examples, how insufficient without virtue are advantages in all these respects to secure felicity. Concluding these illustrations with the fundamental truth, that "virtue alone is happiness below," he recurs to his former doctrine of the conversion of self-love to social; and he deduces the principle of universal benevolence from the progress to be traced in the mind of the virtuous man through the several stages and degrees of partial affection. With this, he unites the hope of renovated happiness in a future state; and thus completes the scale of man's supreme felicity, as connected with the greatest elevation of virtue. A most finished and beautiful apostrophe to his "guide, philosopher, and friend," with a brief summary of the topics of the several epistles, terminates the poem.

From the preceding analysis of the Essay on Man, the reader will probably find himself at a loss to deduce that exquisite chain of argumentation, that lucid method, which are with so much evident labor attempted to be traced out by the Right Reverend commentator. He will rather

discern a writer, made a system-builder by accident, but a poet by nature, taking upagrand and copious topic, well adapted in parts for the display of his genius, but as a whole belonging to a very different class of composers. He will see him exhibiting a great variety of powers according to the exigencies of his subject; sometimes close, concise, nervous, and sententious; sometimes copious, expansive, and brilliant;—now enchanting by elegance and beauty, now commanding by dignity and sublimity. The work itself he will probably esteem as one of the noblest productions, not only of its author, but of English poetry; and amidst all its defects, he will rejoice that the writer was induced to exercise his talents in a walk so new, and in many respects so well suited to them. In fine, if he does not choose to derive his *ethical system* from the Essay on Man, he will again and again have recourse to it as a storehouse of great and generous sentiments; and he will never rise from its perusal without feeling his mind animated with the love of virtue, and improved in benevolence towards his fellow creatures, and piety towards his Creator.

AN ESSAY

ON THE

PLAN AND CHARACTER

OF

THOMSON'S SEASONS.

WHEN a work of art to masterly execution adds novelty of design, it demands not only a cursory admiration, but such a mature inquiry into the principles upon which it has been formed, as may determine how far it deserves to be received as a model for future attempts in the same walk. Originals are always rare productions. The performances of artists in general, even of those who stand high in their respective classes, are only imitations; which have more or less merit, in proportion to the degree of skill and judgement with which they copy originals more or less excellent. A good original, therefore, forms an æra in the art itself; and the history of every art divides itself into periods comprehending the intervals between the appearance of different approved originals. Sometimes, indeed, various models of a

very different cast may exercise the talents of imitators during a single period; and this will more frequently be the case, as arts become more generally known and studied; difference of taste being always the result of liberal and varied pursuit.

How strongly these periods are marked in the history of Poetry, both ancient and modern, a cursory view will suffice to show. The scarcity of originals here is universally acknowledged and lamented, and the present race of poets are thought particularly chargeable with this defect. It ought, however, to be allowed in their favor, that if genius has declined, taste has improved; and that if they imitate more, they choose better models to copy after.

That THOMSON'S SEASONS is the original whence our modern descriptive poets have derived that more elegant and correct style of painting natural objects which distinguishes them from their immediate predecessors, will, I think, appear evident to one who examines their several casts and manners. That none of them, however, have yet equalled their master; and that his performance is an exquisite piece, replete with beauties of the most engaging and delightful kind; will be sensibly felt by all of congenial taste:—and perhaps no poem was ever composed which

addressed itself to the feelings of a greater number of readers. It is, therefore, on every account an object well worthy the attention of criticism; and an inquiry into the peculiar nature of its plan and the manner of its execution may be an agreeable introduction to a re-perusal of it in the elegant edition now offered to the public.

The description of such natural objects as by their beauty, grandeur, or novelty, agreeably impress the imagination, has at all times been a principal and favorite occupation of Poetry. Various have been the methods in which such descriptions have been introduced. They have been made subservient to the purposes of ornament and illustration, in the more elevated and abstracted kinds of Poetry, by being used as objects of similitude. They have constituted a pleasing and necessary part of epic narration, when employed in forming a scenery suitable to the events. The simple tale of pastoral life could scarcely without their aid be rendered in any degree interesting. The precepts of an art, and the systems of philosophers, depend upon the adventitious ornaments afforded by them for almost every thing which can render them fit subjects for poetry.

Thus intermixed as they are with almost all, and essential to some species of poetry, it was however thought that they could not legitimately

constitute the whole, or even the principal part, of a capital piece. Something of a more solid nature was required as the ground-work of a poetical fabric; *pure description* was opposed to *sense*; and binding together the wild flowers which grew obvious to common sight and touch, was deemed a trifling and unprofitable amusement.

Such was the state of critical opinion, when Thomson published, in succession, but not in their present order[a], the pieces which compose his *Seasons*; the first capital work in which natural description was professedly the principal object. To paint the face of nature as changing through the changing seasons; to mark the approaches and trace the progress of these vicissitudes, in a series of landscapes all formed upon images of grandeur or beauty; and to give animation and variety to the whole by interspersing manners and incidents suitable to the scenery; appears to be the general design of this poem. Essentially different from a didactic piece, its *business* is to describe, and the occupation of its *leisure* to teach. And as in the *Georgics*, whenever the poet has for a while, borne away by the warmth of fancy, wandered through the flowery wilds of description, he suddenly checks himself,

[a] They appeared in the following order: *Winter, Summer, Spring, Autumn.*

and returns to the toils of the husbandman; so Thomson, in the midst of his delightful lessons of morality, and affecting relations, recurs to a view of that state of the season which introduced the digression.

It is an attention to this leading idea, that in this piece there is a progressive series of descriptions, all tending to a certain point, and all parts of a general plan, which alone can enable us to range through the vast variety and quick succession of objects presented in it, with any clear conception of the writer's method, or true judgement concerning what may be regarded as forwarding his main purpose, or as merely ornamental deviation. The particular elucidation of this point will constitute the principal part of the present Essay.

Although each of the *Seasons* appears to have been intended as a complete piece, and contains within itself the natural order of beginning, middle, and termination, yet, as they were at length collected and modelled by their author, they have all a mutual relation to each other, and concur in forming a more comprehensive whole. The annual space in which the earth performs its revolution round the sun is so strongly marked by nature for a perfect period, that all mankind have agreed in forming their computations of time

upon it. In all the temperate climates of the globe, the four seasons are so many progressive stages in this circuit, which, like the acts in a well-constructed drama, gradually disclose, ripen, and bring to an end the various business transacted on the great theatre of nature. The striking analogy which this period with its several divisions bears to the course of human existence, has been remarked and pursued by writers of all ages and countries. Spring has been represented as the youth of the year—the season of pleasing hope, lively energy, and rapid increase. Summer has been resembled to perfect manhood—the season of steady warmth, confirmed strength, and unremitting vigor. Autumn, which, while it bestows the rich products of full maturity, is yet ever hastening to decline, has been aptly compared to that period, when the man, mellowed by age, yields the most valuable fruits of experience and wisdom, but daily exhibits increasing symptoms of decay. The cold, cheerless, and sluggish Winter has almost without a metaphor been termed the decrepit and hoary old age of the year. Thus the history of the year, pursued through its changing seasons, is that of an individual, whose existence is marked by a progressive course from its origin to its termination. It is thus represented by our poet: this idea preserves an unity and

connexion through his whole work; and the accurate observer will remark a beautiful chain of circumstances in his description, by which the birth, vigor, decline, and extinction of the vital principle of the year are pictured in the most lively manner.

This order and gradation of the whole runs, as has been already hinted, through each division of the poem. Every season has its incipient, confirmed, and receding state, of which its historian ought to give distinct views, arranged according to the succession in which they appear. Each, too, like the prismatic colors, is indistinguishably blended in its origin and termination with that which precedes and which follows it; and it may be expected from the pencil of an artist to hit off these mingled shades so as to produce a pleasing and picturesque effect. Our poet has not been inattentive to these circumstances in the conduct of his plan. His *Spring* begins with a view of the season as yet unconfirmed, and partaking of the roughness of Winter[a]; and it is not till after several steps in gradual progression, that it breaks forth in all its ornaments, as the fa-

[a] A descriptive piece, in which this very interval of time is represented, with all the accuracy of a naturalist, and vivid colouring of a poet, has lately appeared in a poem of Mr. Warton's, entitled *The first of April.*

vorite of Love and Pleasure. His *Autumn*, after a rich prospect of its bounties and splendors, gently fades into "the sere, the yellow leaf," and with the lengthened night, the clouded sun, and the rising storm, sinks into the arms of Winter. It is remarkable, that in order to produce something of a similar effect in his *Summer*, a season which, on account of its uniformity of character, does not admit of any strongly-marked gradations, he has comprised the whole of his description within the limits of a single day, pursuing the course of the sun from its rising to its setting. A Summer's day is, in reality, a just model of the entire season. Its beginning is moist and temperate; its middle, sultry and parching; its close, soft and refreshing. By thus exhibiting all the vicissitudes of Summer under one point of view, they are rendered much more striking than could have been done in a series of feebly contrasted and scarcely distinguishable periods.

With this idea of the general plan of the whole work, and of its several parts, we proceed to take a view of the various subjects composing the descriptive series of which it principally consists.

Every grand and beautiful appearance in nature, that distinguishes one portion of the annual circuit from another, is a proper source of materials for the *poet of the Seasons*. Of these, some are

obvious to the common observer, and require only justness and elegance of taste for the selection: others discover themselves only to the mind opened and enlarged by science and philosophy. All the knowledge we acquire concerning natural objects by such a train of observation and reasoning as merits the appellation of science, is comprehended under the two divisions of *Natural Philosophy* and *Natural History*. Both of these may be employed to advantage in descriptive poetry: for although it be true, that poetical composition, being rather calculated for amusement than instruction, and addressing itself to the many who feel, rather than to the few who reason, is improperly occupied about the abstruse and argumentative parts of a science; yet, to reject those grand and beautiful ideas which a philosophical view of nature offers to the mind, merely because they are above the comprehension of vulgar readers, is surely an unnecessary degradation of this noble art. Still more narrow and unreasonable is that critical precept, which, in conformity to the received notion that fiction is the soul of poetry, obliges the poet to adopt ancient errors in preference to modern truths; and this even where truth has the advantage in point of poetical effect. In fact, modern philosophy is as much superior to the ancient in sublimity as in solidity; and the

most vivid imagination cannot paint to itself scenes of grandeur equal to those which cool science and demonstration offer to the enlightened mind. Objects so vast and magnificent as planets rolling with even pace through their orbits, comets rushing along their devious track, light springing from its unexhausted source, mighty rivers formed in their subterranean beds, do not require, or even admit, a heightening from the fancy. The most faithful pencil here produces the noblest pictures; and Thomson, by strictly adhering to the character of the *poet of nature*, has treated all these topics with a true sublimity, which a writer of less knowledge and accuracy could never have attained. The strict propriety with which subjects from Astronomy and the other parts of Natural Philosophy are introduced into a poem describing the changes of the Seasons, need not be insisted on, since it is obvious that the primary cause of all these changes is to be sought in principles derived from these sciences. They are the ground-work of the whole; and establish that connected series of cause and effect, upon which all those appearances in nature depend, from whence the descriptive poet draws his materials.

Natural History, in its most extensive signification, includes every observation relative to the distinctions, resemblances, and changes of all the

bodies, both animate and inanimate, which nature offers to us. These observations, however, deserve to be considered as part of a science only when they refer to some general truth, and form a link of that vast chain which connects all created being in one grand system. It was my attempt in an Essay lately published,* to show how necessary a more accurate and scientific survey of natural objects than has usually been taken, was to the avoiding the common defects, and attaining the highest beauties, of descriptive poetry; and some of the most striking examples of excellence arising from this source were extracted from the poem now before us. It will be unnecessary here to recapitulate the substance of these remarks, or to mark out singly the several passages of our author which display his talents for description to the greatest advantage. Our present design rather requires such a general view of the materials he has collected, and the method in which he has arranged them, as may show in what degree they forward and coincide with the plan of his work.

The correspondence between certain changes in the animal and vegetable tribes, and those revolutions of the heavenly bodies which produce the vicissitudes of the Seasons, is the foundation

* Essay on the Application of Natural History to Poetry.

of an alliance between Astronomy and Natural History, that equally demands attention as a matter of curious speculation, and of practical utility. The astronomical calendar, filled up by the Naturalist, is a combination of science at the same time pregnant with important instruction to the husbandman, and fertile in grand and pleasing objects to the poet and philosopher. Thomson seems constantly to have kept in view a combination of this kind; and to have formed from it such an idea of the *œconomy of nature*, as enabled him to preserve a regularity of method and uniformity of design through all the variety of his descriptions. We shall attempt to draw out a kind of historical narrative of his progress through the Seasons, as far as this order is observable.

Spring is characterized as the season of the renovation of nature; in which animals and vegetables, excited by the kindly influence of returning warmth, shake off the torpid inaction of Winter, and prepare for the continuance and increase of their several species. The vegetable tribes, as more independent and self-provided, lead the way in this progress. The poet, accordingly, begins with representing the reviviscent plants emerging, as soon as genial showers have softened the ground, in numbers "beyond the power of botanist to reckon up their tribes." The opening

blossoms and flowers soon call forth from their winter retreats those industrious insects which derive sustenance from their nectareous juices. As the beams of the sun become more potent, the larger vegetables, shrubs and trees, unfold their leaves; and as soon as a friendly concealment is by their means provided for the various nations of the feathered race, they joyfully begin the course of laborious but pleasing occupations, which are to engage them during the whole season. The delightful series of pictures, so truly expressive of that genial spirit that pervades the Spring, which Thomson has formed on the variety of circumstances attending the *passion of the groves*, cannot escape the notice and admiration of the most negligent eye. Affected by the same soft influence, and equally indebted to the renewed vegetable tribes for food and shelter, the several kinds of quadrupeds are represented as concurring in the celebration of this charming Season with conjugal and parental rites. Even man himself, though from his social condition less under the dominion of physical necessities, is properly described as partaking of the general ardor. Such is the order and connection of this whole book, that it might well pass for a commentary upon a most beautiful passage in the philosophical poet Lucretius; who certainly wanted nothing but a

better system and more circumscribed subject, to have appeared as one of the greatest masters of description in either ancient or modern poetry. Reasoning on the unperishable nature, and perpetual circulation, of the particles of matter, he deduces all the delightful appearances of Spring from the seeds of fertility which descend in the vernal showers.

——— pereunt imbres, ubi eos pater Æther
In gremium matris Terrai præcipitavit.
At nitidæ surgunt fruges, ramique virescunt
Arboribus; crescunt ipsæ, fœtuque gravantur:
Hinc alitur porro nostrum genus atque ferarum:
Hinc lætas urbeis pueris florere videmus,
Frundiferasque novis avibus canere undique sylvas.
Hinc fessæ pecudes pingues per pabula læta
Corpora deponunt, et candens lacteus humor
Uberibus manat distentis; hinc nova proles
Artubus infirmis teneras lasciva per herbas
Ludit, lacte mero menteis percussa novellas.

LUCRET. *lib.* i. 251 &c.

The rains are lost, when Jove descends in showers
Soft on the bosom of the parent earth:
But springs the shining grain; their verdant robe
The trees resume; they grow, and pregnant bend
Beneath their fertile load: hence kindly food
The living tribes receive; the cheerful town
Beholds its joyous bands of flowering youth;
With new-born songs the leafy groves resound;
The full-fed flocks amid the laughing meads
Their weary bodies lay, while wide-distent
The plenteous udder teems with milky juice;
And o'er the grass, as their young hearts beat high,
Swell'd by the pure and generous streams they drain,
Frolic the wanton lambs with joints infirm.

The period of Summer is marked by fewer and less striking changes in the face of Nature. A soft and pleasing languor, interrupted only by the gradual progression of the vegetable and animal tribes towards their state of maturity, forms the leading character of this season. The active fermentation of the juices, which the first access of genial warmth had excited, now subsides; and the increasing heats rather inspire faintness and inaction than lively exertions. The insect race alone seem animated with peculiar vigor under the more direct influence of the sun; and are therefore with equal truth and advantage introduced by the poet to enliven the silent and drooping scenes presented by the other forms of animal nature. As this source, however, together with whatever else our summers afford, is insufficient to furnish novelty and business enough for this act of the drama of the year, the poet judiciously opens a new field, profusely fertile in objects suited to the glowing colors of descriptive poetry. By an easy and natural transition, he quits the chastised summer of our temperate clime for those regions where a perpetual summer reigns, exalted by such superior degrees of solar heat as give an entirely new face to almost every part of nature. The terrific grandeur prevalent in some of these, the exquisite richness and beauty in others, and the novelty in all, afford such a happy variety for the poet's

selection, that we need not wonder if some of his noblest pieces are the product of this delightful excursion. He returns, however, with apparent satisfaction to take a last survey of the softer summer of our island; and after closing the prospect of terrestrial beauties, artfully shifts the scene to celestial splendors, which, though perhaps not more striking in this season than in some of the others, are now alone agreeable objects of contemplation in a northern climate.

Autumn is too eventful a period in the history of the year within the temperate parts of the globe, to require foreign aid for rendering it more varied and interesting. The promise of the Spring is now fulfilled. The silent and gradual process of maturation is completed; and human industry beholds with triumph the rich products of its toil. The vegetable tribes disclose their infinitely various forms of *fruit*; which term, while, with respect to common use it is confined to a few peculiar modes of fructification, in the more comprehensive language of the naturalist includes every product of vegetation by which the rudiments of a future progeny are developed, and separated from the parent plant. These are in part collected and stored up by those animals for whose sustenance during the ensuing sleep of nature they are provided. The rest, furnished with various contrivances for dissemination, are scattered, by

the friendly winds which now begin to blow, over the surface of that earth which they are to clothe and decorate. The young of the animal race, which Spring and Summer had brought forth and cherished, having now acquired sufficient vigor, quit their concealments, and offer themselves to the pursuit of the carnivorous among their fellow-animals, and of the great destroyer man. Thus the scenery is enlivened with the various sports of the hunter; which, however repugnant they may appear to that system of general benevolence and sympathy which philosophy would inculcate, have ever afforded a most agreeable exertion to the human powers, and have much to plead in their favor as a necessary part of the great plan of Nature. Indeed, she marks her intention with sufficient precision, by refusing to grant any longer those friendly shades which had grown for the protection of the infant offspring. The grove loses its honors; but before they are entirely tarnished, an adventitious beauty, arising from that gradual decay which loosens the withering leaf, gilds the autumnal landscape with a temporary splendor, superior to the verdure of Spring, or the luxuriance of Summer. The infinitely various and ever-changing hues of the leaves at this season, melting into every soft gradation of tint and shade, have long engaged the

imitation of the painter, and are equally happy ornaments in the description of the poet.

These unvarying symptoms of approaching Winter now warn several of the winged tribes to prepare for their aërial voyage to those happy climates of perpetual summer, where no deficiency of food or shelter can ever distress them; and about the same time, other fowls of hardier constitution, which are contented with escaping the iron winters of the arctic regions, arrive to supply the vacancy. Thus the striking scenes afforded by that wonderful part of the œconomy of Nature, the migration of birds, present themselves at this season to the poet. The thickening fogs, the heavy rains, the swoln rivers, while they deform this sinking period of the year, add new subjects to the pleasing variety which reigns throughout its whole course, and which justifies the poet's character of it, as the season when the Muse "best exerts her voice."

Winter, directly opposite as it is in other respects to Summer, yet resembles it in this, that it is a season in which Nature is employed rather in secretly preparing for the mighty changes which it successively brings to light, than in the actual exhibition of them. It is therefore a period equally barren of events; and has still less of animation than Summer, inasmuch as lethargic in-

sensibility is a state more distant from vital energy than the languor of indolent repose. From the fall of the leaf, and withering of the herb, an unvarying death-like torpor oppresses almost the whole vegetable creation, and a considerable part of the animal, during this entire portion of the year. The whole insect race, which filled every part of the Summer landscape with life and motion, are now either buried in profound sleep, or actually no longer exist, except in the unformed rudiments of a future progeny. Many of the birds and quadrupeds are retired to concealments, from which not even the calls of hunger can force them; and the rest, intent only on the preservation of a joyless being, have ceased to exert those powers of pleasing, which at other seasons so much contribute to their mutual happiness, as well as to the amusement of their human sovereign. Their social connections, however, are improved by their wants. In order the better to procure their scanty subsistence, and resist the inclemencies of the sky, they are taught by instinct to assemble in flocks, and this provision has the secondary effect of gratifying the spectator with something of novelty and action even in the dreariness of a wintry prospect.

But it is in the extraordinary changes and agitations which the elements, and the surrounding

atmosphere undergo during this season, that the poet of nature must principally look for relief from the gloomy uniformity reigning through other parts of the creation. Here scenes are presented to his view, which, were they less frequent, must strike with wonder and admiration the most incurious spectator. The effects of cold are more sudden, and in many instances more extraordinary and unexpected, than those of heat. He who has beheld the vegetable productions of even a northern Summer, will not be greatly amazed at the richer and more luxuriant, but still resembling, growths of the tropics. But one who has always been accustomed to view water in a liquid and colourless state, cannot form the least conception of the same element as hardened into an extensive plain of solid crystal, or covering the ground with a robe of the purest white. The highest possible degree of astonishment must therefore attend the first view of these phenomena; and as in our temperate climate but a small portion of the year affords these spectacles, we find that, even here, they have novelty enough to excite emotions of agreeable surprise. But it is not to novelty alone that they owe their charms. Their intrinsic beauty is, perhaps, individually superior to that of the gayest objects presented by the other seasons. Where is the elegance and bril-

liancy that can compare with that which decorates every tree or bush on the clear morning succeeding a night of hoar frost? or what is the lustre that would not appear dull and tarnished in competition with a field of snow just glazed over with frost? By the vivid description of such objects as these, contrasted with the savage sublimity of storms and tempests, our poet has been able to produce a set of winter landscapes, as engaging to the fancy as the apparently happier scenes of genial warmth and verdure.

But he has not trusted entirely to these resources for combating the natural sterility of Winter. Repeating the pleasing artifice of his Summer, he has called in foreign aid, and has heightened the scenery with grandeur and horror not our own. The famished troops of wolves pouring from the Alps; the mountains of snow rolling down the precipices of the same regions; the dreary plains over which the Laplander urges his rein-deer; the wonders of the icy sea, and volcanoes "flaming through a waste of snow;" are objects judiciously selected from all that Nature presents most singular and striking in the various domains of boreal cold and wintry desolation.

Thus have we attempted to give a general view of those materials which constitute the groundwork of a poem on the Seasons; which are essen-

tial to its very nature; and on the proper arrangement of which its regularity and connection depend. The extent of knowledge, as well as the powers of description, which Thomson has exhibited in this part of his work, is, on the whole, truly admirable; and though, with the present advanced taste for accurate observation in natural history, some improvements might be suggested, yet he certainly remains unrivalled in the list of descriptive poets.

But the rural landscape is not solely made up of land, and water, and trees, and birds, and beasts; *man* is a distinguished figure in it; his multiplied occupations and concerns introduce themselves into every part of it; he intermixes even in the wildest and rudest scenes, and throws a life and interest upon every surrounding object. *Manners* and *character* therefore constitute a part even of a descriptive poem; and in a plan so extensive as the history of the year, they must enter under various forms, and upon numerous occasions.

The most obvious and appropriated use of human figures in pictures of the Seasons, is the introduction of them to assist in marking out the succession of annual changes by their various labors and amusements. In common with other animals, man is directed in the diversified employment of earning a toilsome subsistence by an at

tention to the vicissitudes of the seasons; and all his diversions in the simple state of rustic society are also regulated by the same circumstance. Thus a series of moving figures enlivens the landscape, and contributes to stamp on each scene its peculiar character. The shepherd, the husbandman, the hunter, appear in their turns; and may be considered as natural concomitants of that portion of the yearly round which prompts their several occupations.

But it is not only the bodily pursuits of man which are affected by these changes; the sensations and affections of his mind are almost equally under their influence: and the result of the whole, as forming the enamoured votary of Nature to a peculiar cast of character and manners, is not less conspicuous. Thus the poet of the Seasons is at liberty, without deviating from his plan, to descant on the varieties of moral constitution, and the powers which external causes are found to possess over the temper of the soul. He may draw pictures of the pastoral life in all its genuine simplicity; and, assuming the tone of a moral instructor, may contrast the peace and felicity of innocent retirement, with the turbulent agitations of ambition and avarice.

The various incidents too, upon which the simple tale of rural events is founded, are very much

modelled by the difference of seasons. The catastrophes of Winter differ from those of Summer; the sports of Spring from those of Autumn. Thus, little history pieces and adventures, whether pathetic or amusing, will suggest themselves to the poet; which, when properly adapted to the scenery and circumstances, may very happily coincide with the main design of the composition.

The bare enumeration of these several occasions of introducing draughts of human life and manners, will be sufficient to call to mind the admirable use which Thomson throughout his whole poem has made of them. He, in fact, never appears more truly inspired with his subject, than when giving birth to those sentiments of tenderness and beneficence, which seem to have occupied his whole heart. An universal benevolence, extending to every part of the animal creation, manifests itself in almost every scene he draws; and the rural character, as delineated in his feelings, contains all the softness, purity, and simplicity, that are feigned of the golden age. Yet, excellent as the moral and sentimental part of his work must appear to every congenial mind, it is, perhaps, that in which he may the most easily be rivalled. A refined and feeling heart may derive from its own proper sources a store of corresponding sentiment, which will naturally clothe itself in the

form of expression best suited to the occasion. Nor does the invention of those simple incidents which are most adapted to excite the sympathetic emotions, require any great stretch of fancy. The nearer they approach to common life, the more certainly will they produce their effect. Wonder and surprise are affections of so different a kind, and so distract the attention, that they never fail to diminish the force of the pathetic. On these accounts, writers much inferior in respect to the powers of description and imagery, have equalled our poet in elegant and benevolent sentiment, and perhaps excelled him in interesting narration. Of these, it will be sufficient to mention the ingenious author of a French poem on the Seasons; who, though a mere copyist in the descriptive parts, has made many pleasing additions to the manners and incidents proper for such a composition.

But there is a strain of sentiment of a higher and more digressive nature, with which Thomson has occupied a considerable portion of his poem. The fundamental principles of moral philosophy, ideas concerning the origin and progress of government and civilization, historical sketches, and reviews of the characters most famous in ancient and modern history, are interspersed through the various parts of the Seasons. The manly, liberal,

and enlightened spirit which this writer breathes in all his works, must ever endear him to the friends of truth and virtue; and, in particular, his genuine patriotism and zeal in the cause of liberty will render his writings always estimable to the British reader. But, just and important as his thoughts on these topics may be, there may remain a doubt in the breast of the critic, whether their introduction in a piece like this do not, in some instances, break in upon that unity of character which every work of art should support. We have seen, from the general plan and tenor of the poem, that it is professedly of the rural cast. The objects it is chiefly conversant with are those presented by the hand of nature, not the products of human art; and when man himself is introduced as a part of the group, it would seem that, in conformity to the rest, he ought to be represented in such a state only, as the simplest forms of society, and most unconstrained situations in it, exhibit. Courts and cities, camps and senates, do not well accord with sylvan scenery. From the principle of congruity, therefore, a critic might be induced to reject some of these digressive ornaments, though intrinsically beautiful, and doubtless contributing to the elevation and variety of the piece. His judgement in this respect would be a good deal influenced by the manner of their introduc-

tion. In some instances this is so easy and natural, that the mind is scarcely sensible of the deviation; in others it is more abrupt and unartful. As examples of both, we may refer to the passages in which various characters from English and from Grecian and Roman history are displayed. The former, by a happy gradation, is introduced at the close of a delightful piece, containing the praises of Britain; which is itself a kind of digression, though a very apt and seasonable one. The latter has no other connection with the part at which it is inserted, than the very forced and distant one, that, as reading may be reckoned among the amusements appropriated to Winter, such subjects as these will naturally offer themselves to the studious mind.

There is another source of sentiment to the poet of the Seasons, which, while it is superior to the last in real elevation, is also strictly connected with the nature of his work. The genuine philosopher, while he surveys the grand and beautiful objects every where surrounding him, will be prompted to lift his eye to the great cause of all these wonders; the planner and architect of this mighty fabric, every minute part of which so much awakens his curiosity and admiration. The laws by which this being acts, the ends which he seems to have pursued, must excite his humble

researches; and in proportion as he discovers infinite power in the means, directed by infinite goodness in the intention, his soul must be wrapt in astonishment, and expanded with gratitude. The *œconomy of Nature* will, to such an observer, be the perfect scheme of an all-wise and beneficent mind; and every part of the wide creation will appear to proclaim the praise of its great author. Thus a new connection will manifest itself between the several parts of the universe; and a new order and design will be traced through the progress of its various revolutions.

Thomson's Seasons is as eminently a religious as it is a descriptive poem. Thoroughly impressed with sentiments of veneration for the author of that assemblage of order and beauty which it was his province to paint, he takes every proper occasion to excite similar emotions in the breasts of his readers. Entirely free from the gloom of superstition and the narrowness of bigotry, he every where represents the Deity as the kind and beneficent parent of all his works, always watchful over their best interests, and from seeming evil still educing the greatest possible good to all his creatures. In every appearance of nature he beholds the operation of a divine hand; and regards, according to his own emphatical phrase, each change throughout the revolving

year as but the "varied God." This spirit, which breaks forth at intervals in each division of his poem, shines full and concentred in that noble *hymn* which crowns the work. This piece, the sublimest production of its kind since the days of Milton, should be considered as the winding up of all the variety of matter and design contained in the preceding parts; and thus is not only admirable as a separate composition, but is contrived with masterly skill to strengthen the unity and connection of the Great Whole.

Thus is planned and constructed a poem, which, founded as it is upon the unfading beauties of Nature, will live as long as the language in which it is written shall be read. If the perusal of it be in any respect rendered more interesting or instructive by this imperfect Essay, the purpose of the writer will be fully answered.

A COMPARISON

BETWEEN

THOMSON AND COWPER

AS

DESCRIPTIVE POETS.

NO descriptive poem in any language has obtained equal popularity with the *Seasons* of Thomson, a work of which the description of rural nature was the proper subject, while moral and philosophical sentiment was its appendage and decoration. It was happily calculated to please as well those whose imaginations were readily impressed with the sublime and beautiful, as those whose hearts were alive to feelings of tenderness and humanity. It found so many readers, that probably no single circumstance has contributed so much to that love of the country, and taste for the charms of nature, which peculiarly characterise the inhabitants of this island, as the early associations formed by the perusal of this poem. It also, like all popular compositions, drew after it a current of imitation ; and it was the model of

that exact style of painting which is discernible in the performances of most of our later descriptive and didactic poets.

This style is a distinguishing feature of that very singular and original poem, the *Task*, a work, the numberless beauties of which have acquired it a popularity scarcely inferior to that of the *Seasons;* and have secured it a permanent place among the select productions of English poetry. Whether it is more properly to be arranged in the descriptive or the didactic class, is a question of little moment; but considering it as possessing peculiar excellence in the first of these characters, it may be an interesting topic of critical discussion to compare the different manners of the *Task* and the *Seasons* in the description of natural objects, and to estimate their several merits.

To select a variety of circumstances which shall identify the object, and at the same time present it to the imagination in strong and lively coloring, is the essence of poetical description. The qualities enumerated must not be so lax and general as to apply equally to several species of things (which is the ordinary fault of the oriental manner of delineating); nor yet so methodically precise as the descriptions in natural history, which are addressed more to the intellect than to the imagination. Grand and sublime objects are

best described by a few bold touches; for greatness is lost by being parcelled into minute portions; but objects of beauty and curiosity will bear to be viewed microscopically; and if the particulars are skilfully chosen, the effect is enhanced by distinctness. It is also desirable that the circumstances should be suggested by personal observation; else, the picture will probably be defective in accuracy, or at least will be marked with the faintness of a copy from another's conceptions.

No poetical artist can well venture to draw with minuter strokes than Thomson has done in the delineations of rural scenery and occupations which constitute the proper matter or staple of his poem, and which are generally both pleasing to contemplate and happily selected for the purpose of characterising the season. It would be difficult to determine whether the grand or the agreeable objects presented by nature were most congenial to his disposition. If his imagination was captivated by the former, his heart inclined him to the latter, especially to such as called forth kind and benevolent emotions; and as those offered themselves most copiously to his observation, they occur most frequently in his poem. His scenes of sublimity are chiefly taken from the polar and tropical regions, in depicting which, he only transcribes

(with a poetical pen and fancy, indeed) the descriptions of travellers. His home-scenery seems to have been almost entirely suggested by his own remarks, first made when he was a youth on the banks of the Tweed, and afterwards enlarged when he was a guest or an inhabitant in some of the finest parts of England. As he rejected no objects, however trivial, which could serve to mark the season he was describing, he appears to have thought it incumbent upon him, in order to support the dignity of verse, to intermix the figures and phraseology of the higher kinds of poetry; and to this he was particularly induced by the character of blank verse, in which he composed; for this species, being so little distinguished from prose by its measure, had acquired, in the practice of several eminent writers, an artificial stateliness of diction, more remote from common speech than the usual heroic rhymed couplet. This mixture of high-wrought language with a humble topic is one of the peculiar features of Thomson's style in descriptive poetry. A few examples will illustrate the manner of this combination.

In *Summer* a picture is given of hay-making, in which, the various operations of that pleasing rural labor are minutely represented. The following lines are part of the description :—

Ev'n stooping age is here, and infant hands
Trail the long rake, or with the fragrant load
O'ercharg'd, amid the *kind oppression* roll.
* * * * * * * *
——— all in a row
Advancing broad, or wheeling round the field,
They spread the *breathing harvest* to the sun.

In the autumnal scene of the hare-hunt, when the poor animal is put up,—

* * * she springs amazed, and all
The *savage soul of game* is up at once.

The stag, in similar circumstances,

Gives *all his swift aërial soul* to flight.

When a herd of cattle has taken alarm from the attack of a swarm of gad-flies,

* * * * tossing the foam
They scorn the keeper's voice, and scour the plain,
Thro' *all the bright severity of noon.*

All these quotations afford examples of that abstraction or generalization which is one of the distinctions of poetical language, and which, when in unison with the subject and the ordinary strain of the diction, often produces a very happy effect. How far it does so in the preceding passages, the reader may determine according to his own feelings. To me, while the two last appear not only excusable, but worthy of admiration, the former give the perception of turgidity and ill-applied effort. The following lines in the description of

the vintage, afford a singular mixture of vulgar and lofty phraseology :—

> Then comes the *crushing* swain, the *country floats*
> And *foams unbounded* with the *mashy flood*,
> That by degrees fermented and refined,
> Round the *raised nations pours the cup of joy*.

There are few pages of the Seasons which do not present somewhat of this combination of elevated language with common matter, which, whatever critical judgement be passed upon it, must be regarded as characteristic of the author's manner.

Another artifice which he employs to give dignity to a humble topic, is to annex to it moral sentiment, and, as it were, *humanize* the animal natures concerned in the scene. Thus, where he has perhaps descended the lowest,—in his description of a spider catching flies in a window,—this insect is termed

> The *villain* spider * * * cunning and fierce,
> Mixture abhorr'd!

He is afterwards called *the ruffian;* and the victim fly, *the dreadless wanderer;* and the whole action is minutely told in a tragical style that would suit the murder of a Duncan or a Clarence. In like manner, the bear, seeking his winter retreat, is endowed with a human soul :—

> * * with stern patience, scorning weak complaint,
> Hardens his breast against assailing want.

Whatever be thought of these particular examples, it is presumed that no reader of sensibility will object to the pleasing details of the *passion of the groves*, though in some instances the writer may have assigned to his feathered pairs feelings which only belong to human lovers.

The frequent use of compound epithets is another circumstance by which Thomson's diction is strongly marked. These are elliptical modes of expression, by means of which, qualities or attributes are annexed to a subject in the most concise form possible. The effect of this compression is often truly poetical,—a striking idea being excited by a single word, which it would take a line to convey in detail. It is, however, a license in language, and when arbitrarily framed, with no regard to grammatical propriety, is apt to give offence to a correct taste. This is the case when the two parts of the compound have no natural connection, or stand in no relation to each other of substantive and attribute, or of cause and effect. Thus, in the Seasons, *blood-happy*, meaning happy in the taste of blood; *thick-nibbling*, standing close and nibbling; *pale-quivering*, pale and quivering; *fair-exposed*, fair and exposed; seem examples of harsh and vicious formation. In many instances the compounding is effected merely by using an adjective adverbially, as, *wild-throbbing* for wildly

throbbing; *loose-floating* for loosely floating; where too little appears to be gained to justify the license. Upon the whole, Thomson's employment of this device to render language poetical may justly be termed excessive; and it is so characteristic of his style, that Brown, in his "Pipe of Tobacco," has personated this poet chiefly by his compound epithets:—

> * * * * forth issue clouds,
> Thought-thrilling, thirst-inciting clouds around,
> And many-mining fires.

To speak of Thomson generally as a descriptive poet, it may then be said, that in choice of subjects, he rejects none that can be rendered pleasing and impressive, and that he paints with a circumstantial minuteness which gives the objects clear and distinct to the imagination; that with respect to diction, he is usually expressive and energetic, with frequent touches of truly poetic imagery, but occasionally verging to the turgid and cumbrous, particularly when he is desirous of elevating a humble topic by a pomp of phrase. It may be added, that no poet before him ever viewed nature either so extensively or so accurately; and that a benevolent heart, and a soul tutored by philosophy and impressed by the sentiments of a pure and enlarged theology, continually animate his pictures of rural life.

Of the merit of his versification, different ears have judged very differently. That his lines sometimes move heavily beneath an overweight of matter, and that they are occasionally harsh and unmelodious, is sufficiently perceptible; but, considering the length of his poem, such defects may be excused; and the general flow of his strain appears to me equal in harmony to that of most composers of blank verse, though rarely attaining excellence. As he is said to have been a very uncouth reader of his own lines, it is probable that his musical perceptions were not remarkably nice.

Thomson still bore the palm of descriptive poetry, and his manner was the principal object of imitation, when Cowper, who had failed of exciting attention by a volume of poems displaying abundant genius, but in a repulsive garb, burst on the public with his *Task*. This work, without professed subject or plan, consists of a mixture of description, chiefly rural, and of moral and religious sentiment, each introduced as it seems to have suggested itself to the mind of the author, with no other connection than casual association. Educated at a public school, and afterwards initiated in the school of the world; of a temper frank and undisguised; naturally inclined to hilarity, but with great inequality of spirits, which at

length plunged him into a morbid melancholy, and rendered him the victim of a gloomy and appalling system of religion; kind and benevolent in his feelings, but converted by principle to a keen and caustic censor of life and manners; long consigned to a retirement in which his chief employment and solace was the contemplation of nature; Cowper brought a very extraordinary assemblage of qualities, moral and intellectual, to give direction to a genius of the first order. A free converse with men of the world, and an abhorrence of every thing like affectation, in language as well as in manners, had formed him to a style purely English, not disdaining a mixture of common words, and rendered poetical, not by a lofty cant, but by expressions warmed with the vivid imagery that played before his fancy. Equally minute and circumstantial with Thomson in his mode of description, and by no means fastidious in his choice of subjects, in which he was partly influenced by a strong relish for humor, as well as a taste for the beautiful and sublime, he sometimes paints in a manner resembling the Dutch or Flemish school, but always with touches of the true picturesque. When his subject is low, he is content to leave it so, without any effort to raise it by the ambitious ornaments of artificial diction, secure of interesting his reader

by the truth and liveliness of his delineation. Thus, in his picture of the Woodman, which has been happily transferred to canvass, not a word is employed that rises above the matter, yet the language could present no other terms equally expressive :—

> Shaggy, and lean, and shrewd, with pointed ears,
> And tail cropt short, half-lurcher and half-cur,
> His dog attends him. Close behind his heel
> Now creeps he slow, and now with many a frisk
> Wide-scampering, snatches up the drifted snow
> With ivory teeth, or ploughs it with his snout,
> Then shakes his powder'd coat, and barks for joy.
> Heedless of all his pranks, the sturdy churl
> Moves right toward the mark, nor stops for aught
> But now and then, with pressure of his thumb,
> T' adjust the fragrant charge of a short tube
> That fumes beneath his nose. The trailing cloud
> Streams far behind him, scenting all the air.

The Carrier, in a snow-storm,—

> With half-shut eyes, and pucker'd cheeks, and teeth
> Presented bare against the storm,—

is a draught of the same kind, something more bordering on the Dutch style, but perfect as a copy of reality. In both these passages, words are found which could not have suggested themselves to Thomson, or, if they had, would scarcely have been admitted; yet what reader of true taste would change them? This masculine vigor

of vernacular diction, which is characteristic of Cowper's style, and in which it resembles that of Dryden, by no means precludes (any more than it did in that poet) the highest degree of grace and elegance when those qualities are congenial with the subject. What can surpass in gracefulness of language, as well as in beauty of imagery, his enumeration of plants in the flowering-shrubbery?—The tall guelder-rose

——— throwing up into the darkest gloom
Of neighb'ring cypress, or more sable yew,
Her silver globes, light as the foamy surf
That the wind severs from the broken wave.
* * * * * * * *
* * * * * * * *
* * * * * luxuriant above all
The jasmine, throwing wide her elegant sweets,
The deep dark green of whose unvarnish'd leaf
Makes more conspicuous, and illumines more,
The bright profusion of her scatter'd stars.

If the passage in which these lines are contained be compared with a resembling one in Thomson describing the flowers that blow from early Spring to Summer, it will appear, that whilst the latter poet attempts little more than to annex to each some mark of distinction properly belonging to it, the former associates with the subject of his description some idea of the imagination which enhances its effect by parallelism. No-

thing denotes the mind of a poet so much as this operation of the fancy when objects are presented to the external senses.

That Thomson was in general an exact, as well as a minute, observer of nature is evinced in almost every page of the Seasons; yet there are some instances in which Cowper, in touching upon the same circumstances, has displayed superior correctness. Thus, where Thomson, with a truly picturesque selection of incidents, represents the effects of a hard frost, he augments the real wonders of the scene by painting a cascade as if it were congealed into ice at the instant of falling:—

> * * * the dumb cascade,
> Whose idle torrents only seem to roar.

But this is an impossibility, and is regarded as such by Cowper, who has formed a beautiful frost-picture from the opposite appearances. Speaking of a stream stealing away beneath its frozen surface, he says,—

> Not so, where scornful of a check, it leaps
> The mill-dam, dashes on the restless wheel,
> And wantons in the pebbly gulf below.
> No frost can bind it there: its utmost force
> Can but arrest the light and smoky mist
> That in its fall the liquid sheet throws wide.

In this passage, too, Cowper is more accurate

in the silent stealthy flow of the frost-bound stream, than Thomson, who, probably for the sake of poetical effect, represents it as indignantly murmuring at its chains :—

> The whole imprison'd river *growls* below.

Cowper's exactness was probably owing to his having been, from his situation, an observer of nature at an advanced period of life, when the novelty of common objects being exhausted, the rural solitary is reduced to pry more closely into surrounding scenes, in order to excite a new interest in them. Hence, his observations are commonly of a more curious and recondite kind than those of Thomson, who usually takes what lies obvious upon the surface of things. Every reader of the Seasons has admired the pleasing description of the red-breast, "paying to trusted man his annual visit :" it is recognised for perfect nature, because every one has witnessed the reality : but few in their winter walks have made those remarks on the same bird which dictated to Cowper the following lines :—

> The red-breast warbles still, but is content
> With slender notes and more than half suppress'd.
> Pleased with his solitude, and flitting light
> From spray to spray, where'er he rests he shakes
> From many a twig the pendent drops of ice,
> That tinkle in the wither'd leaves below.

This picture is equally natural with the former, and has the additional merit of furnishing new images to the fancy. It was from such a mature and deliberate study of nature that Mr. White of Selborne derived that store of curious observation, which he has presented in the most entertaining miscellany of natural history that was ever composed.

Both of these poets occasionally employed personification, which is a kind of abstract and comprehensive description. To the poet of the Seasons it was an obvious piece of mechanism that each should make its entrance as a living figure; distinguished by some characteristic of that portion of the year of which it was the harbinger; but it cannot be said that in these draughts he has displayed much fancy. The epithet of "ethereal Mildness" which he gives to Spring presents no visual image; and it has been justly objected by Miss Seward, that the "showers of shadowing roses" in which she descends is an usurpation upon the property of Summer. To Summer is assigned nothing more than "refulgent youth," and an "ardent look." Autumn has the common bearings of the sickle and wheaten sheaf, with which he, or she, is oddly said to be "crowned:" and Winter is only marked by the qualities of gloom

and surliness. The other sketches of personification in his poem are too slight to merit notice.

The case is very different with Cowper. His powerful imagination was equal to those *creative* exertions which are perhaps the highest triumph of poetry; and though his purpose in the Task did not urge him to frequent attempts of this kind, yet he has exhibited specimens which in grandeur and elegance have scarcely ever been surpassed. His personified figures of Winter and of Evening will justify this assertion to every reader susceptible of the charms of pure poetry; and, I think, clearly establish his claims to a higher seat on Parnassus than that occupied by Thomson.

The descriptive matter in the Seasons is diversified by some little history pieces, the subjects of which have a reference to that part of the year in which they are introduced. It is generally admitted that the style of Thomson is little suited to the narrative of common life. Destitute of ease, and wholly unlike the language of real conversation, it proves an awkward vehicle for the dialogue and incidents of story-telling; and though an interest is excited by the pathetic of the circumstances, as in the maid struck by lightning, and the man lost in the snow, it owes nothing to the manner of narration. Cowper, on the contrary,

was a master in this style. He perfectly understood common speech, and could readily accommodate his phraseology to his subject. The touching story of Crazy Kate, and the various passages in which he alludes to the melancholy history of his own life, are examples of the natural mode of narration; of which many more instances might be adduced from his other poems.

As the versification of Thomson has been mentioned, it will be proper, by way of comparison, to say something of that of Cowper. His blank verse is in general the apparently negligent effusion of one who, pouring out his thoughts in exuberance, does not long study to put them into measure. But he evidently possessed a musical and practised ear; and his irregularities are not always without design. It is known that in his version of Homer he paid very particular attention to the melody of his lines and its adaptation to the subject; and if, in the Task, his mind was more occupied with the sentiments, there are not wanting passages the flow of which is remarkably harmonious. One example shall suffice for a proof of his talents in this respect:—

> How soft the music of those village bells
> Falling at intervals upon the ear
> In cadence sweet! now dying all away,

Now pealing loud again, and louder still,
Clear and sonorous as the gale comes on.

A fine ear is, then, another poetical requisite in which nature seems to have been more liberal to Cowper than to Thomson. It would, perhaps, be easy to quote from the latter, instances in which harsh or appalling sounds are happily imitated, for our language abounds with words which echo tones of that class; but to make English verse "discourse eloquent music" is a much more difficult task.

Such appear to me to be the principal characteristics of these two original poets in that delineation of natural objects and the incidents of rural life, for which both are so justly admired. Thomson is so far entitled to the first place, that if his minute style of painting had not obtained admission into English poetry, the descriptions in the Task would probably never have existed: yet Cowper cannot be denominated an imitator in them, since his manner is entirely his own, and the objects he has represented were evidently suggested by individual observation. Between the two poems no comparison can subsist; for while the Seasons is the completion of an extensive plan, necessarily comprising a great variety of topics, most of which would occur to every poetical mind

occupied in the same design ; the Task owes nothing to a preconceived argument, but is the extemporaneous product of the very singular mind and genius of the author. It had no model, and can have no parallel.

AN ESSAY

ON

DR. ARMSTRONG'S POEM

ON THE

ART OF PRESERVING HEALTH.

THE Poems termed *didactic* may be considered as of two kinds. Those to which the term is more properly applied, are such as directly profess to teach some art or science. The other species consists of those which, taking up some speculative topic, establish a theory concerning it by argument and illustration. Of the former kind, many will familiarly occur to the reader's memory; and the piece before us is an example of it. Of the latter, are various philosophical and argumentative pieces, from the poem of Lucretius on the Epicurean system, to Pope's Essay on Man, and Akenside's Pleasures of the Imagination. A middle place between the two seems to be occupied by moral poetry, which, at the same time that it lays down practical rules for the conduct of life, dis-

cusses the theoretical principles on which they are founded.

Now in estimating the respective value of these different products of the poetic art, it will be necessary to begin with considering what poetry essentially is, and what are its powers and purposes. It is, I conceive, essential to poetry that it should present ideas to the imagination, either agreeable of themselves, or rendered so by the clothing and accompaniments given to them. Its leading aim is to please; and its powers are, to a certain degree, to make pleasing what would not be so of itself. If, therefore, by the poet's art, to the main end of giving pleasure, can be associated that of communicating instruction in such a way as will more strongly and agreeably impress it on the mind, its complete purpose may be said to be attained. Delight and profit combined are all that can be wished from the noblest of the fine arts.

But there are subjects, the nature of which renders such a combination scarcely possible, and in which every attempt to produce it, can only yield an incongruous mixture of ill-placed ornament and defective instruction. These are especially to be found in those arts of life which depend upon the application of mechanical rules, or the practical skill acquired by experience. To

describe the minute processes of manual art in verse, in such a manner as that they shall be understood, is not only a very difficult task, but a wholly fruitless one; since, after all, the description cannot be so clear and precise as one written in prose, nor can the verse rise to poetry. We may, indeed, admire the skill shown in the attempt to decorate a barren subject, but we must regret that the writer's talents were so ill employed. So obvious is this conclusion, that we may be assured no one ever wrote a didactic poem for the simple purpose of teaching an art. The choice has therefore been dictated by a search after novelty, or the desire of exhibiting a proof of poetical skill. These motives are expressly avowed by Virgil in his Georgics, and are much more probable than the deep political design attributed to that poem, of exciting the Roman nobility to the pursuits of agriculture.

But while perhaps *every* poem strictly didactic labors under the inconvenience of a subject not calculated for displaying the art of poetry in its fairest form, some, both from their nature, and from the manner of treating them, are less defective in this respect than others. Thus, certain arts are closely connected in their theory with large and philosophical views of the system of the universe, or of the principles of the human

mind. Some, even in their practice, afford matter for pleasing description, and admit of easy illustration from the most striking and agreeable objects of external nature. For example, the arts of husbandry are evidently allied to a vast variety of great and interesting topics; and we all know how advantageously Virgil has employed them as the ground-work of one of the most pleasing poems of antiquity. This piece, however, will also serve to show the unfavorable effect of attempting to express matter purely technical in a poetical manner. For no unprejudiced reader will deny, that in many of the preceptive passages, notwithstanding the variety of resources he employs to elevate them into poetry, he is overpowered by his subject, and chained, as it were, to the earth he is laboring;—while on the other hand, as a teacher of the art, he is frequently so obscure, as to have embarrassed the whole race of agricultural and literary critics since his time. It may also be observed, that had he extended his views further into the philosophical part of his subject, and made a full use of the moral and physical variety it was capable of affording, he would not have found it necessary to wander into digressions so remotely connected with his proposed topics, as scarcely to be justified by any reasonable claim of poetic license. For

even the semblance of teaching is destroyed by deviations, the manifest purpose of which is to disengage the reader's attention from the main subject, and fix it upon somewhat more captivating to the imagination.

With respect to the piece before us, its subject seems on the whole as happily calculated for didactic poetry, as most of those which have been taken for the purpose. To say that it is a peculiarly proper one for a physician to write upon, is saying nothing of consequence to the reader. But the preservation of health is, in the first place, a matter of general importance, and therefore interesting to readers of every class. Then, although its rules, scientifically considered, belong to a particular profession, and require previous studies for their full comprehension; yet, in the popular use, they are level to the understanding and experience of every man of reading and reflection. Had the subject been more strictly medical, such as the nature and cure of a particular disease, it would have been liable to the objections attending a confined and professional topic; and, like the *Siphylis* of Fracastorius, could scarcely, by the greatest poetical skill, have been rendered generally pleasing or instructive. But every man being in some measure intrusted with the care of his own health, and being accustomed to specula-

tions concerning Air, Diet, Exercise, and the Passions, the subject may be considered as universal. It is true, these topics can be poetically treated only in a popular manner, and the writer who chooses the vehicle of verse in treating of them, must take up with common and perhaps superficial notions. But by associating these notions with images addressed to the imagination, he may convey them in a more agreeable form; and he may advantageously employ the diction of poetry to give to practical rules an energy and conciseness of expression which may forcibly imprint them on the memory. This power is, indeed, the principal circumstance which imparts real utility to didactic poetry; and we all feel its effects on becoming acquainted with the moral and critical works of such authors as Horace, Boileau, and Pope. Further, the topics with which the Art of Health is conversant, are connected with various of the loftiest and most extensive speculations on general nature; and in pursuing the regular vein of thought, many sources of truly poetical ideas may be opened. It remains now to examine how far the author has availed himself of the advantages of his subject, and in what manner he has supported the character of a didactic poet.

As Invocation is an established part of a regular poem, it was necessary that the piece before

us should be provided with that decoration. The choice of Hygeia, or the Goddess of Health, for the object of address, was dictated by a very obvious propriety. The manner is imitated from that of Lucretius in his fine invocation of Venus; and much imagination is displayed in the description of her approach, and of the various baleful forms of disease and death that fly from her presence.

Of the sources from which health is drawn, salubrious air is one of the most remarkable. Air, therefore, with propriety, is made the peculiar topic of the first book. Perhaps a descriptive passage of more strength can scarcely be met with than that which enumerates the various contaminations of this element in a crowded city. The ideas, indeed, in their own nature disgusting, might be thought almost too vividly represented, did they not by contrast add to the sweetness of the subsequent rural picture, the effect of which is almost equal to that of the fabled calenture in calling forth irresistible longings after the country. Every reader familiar with the vicinity of the metropolis will feel peculiar pleasure from the glimpses given of those favorite summer retreats, Windsor, Richmond, Dulwich, and Hampstead, which will excite in his mind particular images, always much more engaging to the fancy than general ones. The poet next exercises his inven-

tion in one of the higher efforts of the art, that of allegorical personification. His figure and genealogy of *Quartana* are well imagined; but like most of those who create these fancy-formed beings, he fails in the *agency* he attributes to her; for in merely inspiring a fit of the ague, she acts not as a person, but as an incorporeal cause.

He goes on to describe the different sites unfriendly to health, particularly the too moist and the too dry, which he makes the foundation of what are called in the schools of physic the phlegmatic and melancholic temperaments. In his instructions how to guard against the evils of different situations, he somewhat anticipates his future topics of diet and exercise. The passage, however, is full of vigorous description; and the means of correcting the watery and the parched soil afford spirited sketches of landscape. But he is no where so minute, as in that perpetual topic of an Englishman, the bad weather under which our island is so frequently submerged. A kind of splenetic strength of painting distinguishes his gloomy draught of loaded skies and eastern blasts, and of that vexatious fickleness of weather, in which all the seasons seem to "mix in every monstrous day."

We are, however, brought into good-humor again by the description of cheerful, dry, and

sheltered spots in which atmospherical evils may be palliated; and the concluding eulogy on the cheering and invigorating influence of solar heat, leaves the fancy agreeably impressed with a sensation similar to that imparted by a serene summer's day. On the whole, the descriptive beauties of this book are considerable; but as a leading head of his subject, it might, I conceive, have been lengthened with advantage, by some circumstances relative to the influence of air upon health, which he has not touched upon. The sudden operation upon the spirits by alterations in the weight of the atmosphere, as indicated by the barometer, and the medicinal effects of change of climate upon invalids, would have afforded matter both for curious discussion, and interesting, and even pathetic, narration.

Diet, the subject of the second book, is, as the writer observes on entering upon it, comparatively barren and unfavorable to poetry. It is evidently more immersed in technical investigations than the former; and its connection with the grossest of the sensual pleasures, renders it difficult to be treated on without derogating from the dignity of a philosophical poem. Dr. Armstrong, however, has managed it with judgement. He begins with a scientific topic, necessary as a foundation for the preceptive part which is to follow—the circulation

of the blood. This function, however, admits of easy illustration from the common principles of hydraulics, as displayed in the motion of water through pipes and channels. The constant waste of solid particles that such a perpetual current must produce, demonstrates the necessity for a new supply by means of somewhat taken in. Hence naturally follows the consideration of food, its concoction, and the choice of aliments, solid and fluid, suited to persons of different constitutions and in different climates. This is the general plan of the book. The poet's skill consists in taking the subject out of the language and reasonings of science, familiarising it by apt illustration, and diversifying it by amusing digression. All this he has attempted, and with success.

We shall not closely follow his steps while he treats of the digestibility and salubriousness of different foods, and lays down rules for the regulation of appetite. The subject, as we before hinted, is not of the most pleasing kind, and it is apprently rather from necessity than choice that he enters into it. His expressions and images are strong, but strength so employed is unavoidably a-kin to coarseness. A more agreeable topic is the praise of temperance and simple diet, from which he easily slides into a beautiful moral passage, showing how much better riches may be employed

than in the luxuries of the table—by relieving indigence and unfriended merit. One line is almost unrivalled in pathetic energy,

> Tho' hush'd in patient wretchedness at home.

The opposite evils arising from too full and too scanty a diet are next enumerated, and cautions are given respecting the progress from one to the other. The different regimen proper for the several seasons of the year is then touched upon; and this naturally leads the poet to open a new source of variety in description, derived from a view of human life as subsisting in climates removed to the two extremes from our own. The picture of the frigid zone is but slightly sketched; that of the torrid regions is much more minute, and will strongly remind the reader of a similar one by the hand of Thomson; but I dare not assert that it will lose nothing by the comparison. It is rendered less appropriate, by the enumeration of vegetable articles which in reality belong to very different climates; the cocoa and anana being many degrees separated from the countries rich in corn and wine. The cedar of Lebanon, likewise, as a native of the bleak tops of high mountains, ought not to be placed by the side of the palm and plantain.

The succeeding passage, however, which paints the wonders of the Naiad kingdom, though it also has its parallel in the *Seasons*, is not, I think, surpassed by that, or any other poem, in strength and grandeur of description. The awful sublimity of the scenes themselves and the artifice of the poet in introducing himself as a spectator, and marking the supposed impressions on his own mind, elevate this piece to the very summit of descriptive poetry.

The praise of water-drinking follows; with the precepts of the father of physic for choosing rightly this pure and innocent beverage. Notwithstanding the apparent earnestness with which the poet dwells on this topic, there is some reason to suspect that he was not quite hearty in the cause. For he not only adopts the notion of those who have recommended an occasional debauch as a salutary spur to nature; but descanting on the necessity a man may find himself under to practise hard drinking in order to promote the pursuits of ambition or avarice, he advises him (between jest and earnest) to inure himself to the trial by slow degrees. Here the physician and sage seem lost in the jolly companion. He soon, however, resumes those characters; and after remarking the tendency of a continued use of wine to bring on premature old age, he digresses into a theoretical

account of the process by which the animal machine is gradually impeded in its motions, and at length comes to a full stop. This conducts him to a striking termination of the book, in a lofty description of the ravages made by time upon the works of human art, and the world itself.

Exercise, the subject of the third book, is a theme more adapted to poetry, and less immersed in professional disquisitions, than that of the preceding. Its benefits in the preservation of health are universally known; and the poet's task is rather to frame upon it pictures agreeable to the imagination, than to treat of it in a closely preceptive or scientific manner. Dr. Armstrong begins with a lively portrait of the rustic, rendered firm and robust by toil, like a sturdy oak of the forest; and he produces him as a specimen of the influence of exercise on the human frame. He then exhorts the votary of health to partake of the various kinds of rural pastime, the walk in all seasons, the chace, and the sport of fishing. This last amusement introduces a very pleasing passage, in which the poet characterises various streams, particularly the Liddel, on whose pastoral banks he first drew breath. The tribute of affection he pays to his native place, and the retrospect of his own boyish years, are sweetly interesting, and

vie with all that Thomson and Smollet have written on a similar topic.

The species of exercise afforded by gardening, gives occasion to a moral picture, of a man retired from public life, to the cultivation of his estate, surrounded with a select society of old companions, of the same tastes and pursuits with himself. This is wrought so much in the manner of Thomson, that, were it not for some difference of style, it might pass undistinguished as a passage of the Seasons. The "noctes cœnæque deum" of Horace, have contributed to adorn the piece.

Resuming the medical consideration of exercise, he next adverts to its power in strengthening weak parts by habitual exertions; and he dwells on the propriety of a gradual progress from rest to labor, and on the mischiefs attending too violent and heedless toils. This leads him to a serious and pathetic apostrophe on the fatal effects proceeding from exposure to cold, or draughts of cold liquor, when heated, which he represents as the most frequent of all causes of mortal disease. The ancient use of warm baths and unctions after exercise is his next topic, in speaking of which, he finds it necessary to touch upon that important function of the body, insensible perspiration. The strict connection of this with health and disease,

according as it is regular or deranged, has been a favorite argument with certain medical schools, and is here briefly illustrated in poetical language. The use of cold bathing in steeling the frame against the inclemencies of a cold climate, and the advantages of frequent ablution in hot ones, and of cleanliness in all, are further subjects of digression.

He returns to the consideration of exercise, as it is limited by recurring changes of the day and year; warning against it while the body is loaded with food, and during the heats of a summer's noon, and the chills of evening. These preceptive remarks lead him to a vein more fertile of ideas addressed to the imagination; for conceiving the day to be sunk into the silence and gloom of midnight, he views the toil-spent hind wrapt in the arms of profound repose, the sweet soother of his labors. Hence he digresses to the subject of dreams, and paints in vivid colours the horrid scenes that disturb the mind during the delirium of unquiet slumber. The proper period in which sleep is to be indulged, with its due measure to different constitutions, are next considered. The influence of habit in this respect, brings on an exhortation to proceed very gradually in altering every corporeal habit; and this is made an introduction to a description of the successive changes

of the year, with the distempers they bring. All this, and the remainder of the book, might perhaps with greater propriety have made a part of the first head; since its connection with exercise is less obvious than with air. To introduce in some part of his plan an account of epidemic diseases was, however, evidently proper, both as matter for important instruction respecting the preservation of health, and as affording scope for poetical variety. After some common observations on the diseases of Spring and Autumn, and the means of guarding against them, with a forcible injunction against delay as soon as symptoms of danger appear; the poet proceeds to an imitation of Virgil and Lucretius in the particular description of a pestilence; and he very happily chooses for his subject the Sweating-Sickness which first prevailed in England when the Earl of Richmond, afterwards Henry VII., came hither on his expedition against the tyrant Richard. So many graphical descriptions in prose and verse have been made of visitations of this kind, that scarcely any source of novelty remained in the *general* circumstances accompanying them. Dr. Armstrong has therefore judiciously introduced as much as possible of the *particular* character of this singular distemper, which, as far as we learn, was entirely unknown before, and has never appeared since,

that period. He has not even rejected certain popular errors prevalent respecting it, which, though they ought carefully to be avoided in a medical treatise, may perhaps be permitted to enhance the wonder of a poetical narration. Such is that, which asserts Englishmen to have been its only victims, both in their own country and abroad —a notion which certainly adds to the interest with which a native of this country reads the relation. The conclusion of this book is a close copy from Virgil in the design, suitably varied in the circumstances. The deaths beyond the Atlantic allude to the unfortunate expedition to Carthagena, a popular topic of complaint at that period.

The title with which the fourth and last book is inscribed, is *the Passions*; but its subject would be more accurately expressed by the influence of the mind over the body—a large and elevated topic, detached from the technical matter of any particular profession, and in its full extent comprising every thing sublime and affecting in moral poetry. The theory of the union of a spiritual principle with the gross corporeal substance, is that which the writer adopts as the basis of his reasonings. It is this ruling power which

> Wields at his will the dull material world,
> And is the body's health or malady.

He evidently confounds, however, (as all writers

on this system do) matter of great subtilty, with what is not matter—or spirit. These "viewless atoms," he says, "are lost in thinking," yet thought itself is not the enemy of life, but painful thinking, such as that proceeding from anxious studies, and fretful emotions. To prevent the baneful effects of these, he counsels us frequently to vary our objects, and to join the bodily exercise of reading aloud, to the mental labor of meditation. Solitary brooding over thoughts of a particular kind, such, especially, as pride or fear presents to the imagination, is warned against, in a passage full of energy, as the usual parent of madness or melancholy. Sometimes what the poet terms a *chronic passion*, or one arising from a misfortune which has made a lasting impression, such as the loss of a beloved friend, produces a sympathetic languor in the body, which can only be removed by shifting the scene, and plunging in amusement or business. Some persons, however, take a less innocent method of dispelling grief,

> ————and in the tempting bowl
> Of poison'd nectar sweet oblivion swill.

The immediately exhilarating effects, and the sad subsequent reverse, attending this baneful practice, are here painted in the most vivid coloring, and form a highl instructive and pathetivc lesson ;

in particular, the gradual degradation of character which it infallibly brings on, is finely touched.

A kind of moral lecture succeeds, introduced as the supposed precepts of a sage in human life, whose character is represented as a compound of manly sense and cheerfulness. How to acquire happiness by moderation in the pursuit of pleasure, and by the practice of virtue, is the topic of this passage, which, though certainly digressive, has, however, a natural affinity with the leading subject of the book. Virtue has seldom been characterised with more spirit and dignity; and trite as the sentiments are, the energy with which they are expressed commands attention.

The poet next reverts to his more direct purpose, that of considering the passions in their influence upon bodily health. In general, he lays it down as a rule, that all emotions which are pleasing to the mind, are also salutary to the body. But there are exceptions, some being in their nature prone to hurtful excess; as an instance of which he gives the passion of Love. Here, again, he tries his strength with Thomson, and his description cannot but remind the reader of the fine picture of a love-sick youth drawn by that writer in his Spring. Thomson, however, dwells much more minutely on the mental effects of love. Armstrong, with propriety, fixes the attention more on

the changes it induces in the corporeal frame, and this, both as it is a passion, and as it leads to sensual indulgences. With great force, yet with sufficient delicacy, he paints the condition of one unnerved and exhausted by excess in amorous delights. This, indeed, is deviating from the express subject of the book; since love as a passion, and the appetite for sexual enjoyment, are distinct things, the latter being certainly able to subsist without the former, if not the former without the latter. But an insensible gradation led him easily from the one to the other.

The passion of Anger is his next theme, and the bold personification with which he has introduced it, is admirably suited to its violent and precipitate character. A fit of rage has frequently been known at once to overpower the vital faculties, and strike with instant death. To guard against it was therefore a point of peculiar importance; and the poet has presented many striking moral arguments against the indulgence of that habit which makes us prone to ungoverned sallies of this passion. But where reason proves too weak for the controul of this and other unruly affections of the mind, to what other power shall we resort for aid? We may, he hints, oppose passion to passion, and extinguish one by its opposite. But without dwelling on this contrivance

(which, indeed, is neither very philosophical nor manageable) he proceeds to recognise a power in Nature which may be rendered the universal tranquillizer of the breast; and this power is Music. With a contrasted description of the music which exercises this sympathetic dominion over the emotions, and that which is only the execution of difficult trifles, followed by an allusion to the fabulous stories of some ancient masters, and the praise of the art itself, the poet, somewhat abruptly, closes the book and the work.

From this cursory view of the contents of Dr. Armstrong's piece, it will probably appear, that, together with a sufficient variety for the purpose of amusement, there is uniformity of design enough to constitute the proper character of a didactic poem. Almost every thing essential to the preservation of health is touched upon during its course; and the digressive parts are neither wholly impertinent to the main object, nor do they occupy a disproportionate space. Many topics of an elevated nature are occasionally introduced; and moral sentiment is agreeably interwoven with precept and description. The writer has, apparently, found some difficulty in adhering to the arrangement of his design; for neither are the proposed topics of the four books equally copious of matter, nor has he with precision con-

fined himself to the subjects belonging to each. However, as the *real* intention of such a work is not to afford systematic instruction, but to impress the mind with detached particulars, and to amuse it with variety, objections in point of method are little to be regarded. If this performance on the whole offers a fund of useful advice and rational entertainment to every cultivated reader, and at the same time is in a good degree what it professes to be, it has fulfilled its purpose.

It now remains to consider how far this work is characterised by any peculiarity of style and manner.

English blank verse in its structure approaches so nearly to prose, that they who have employed it on elevated subjects, have adopted a variety of methods to give it the stamp of poetry. Some have transplanted as much as possible of the idiom of the ancient languages into their own. They have used words in uncommon senses, derived rather from etymology than practice; and in the formation of sentences, they have studiously deviated from the natural order, and copied the involutions and inversions of the Latin and Greek. Others have enriched their style with novel terms and compound epithets, and have aimed at an uncommon mode of saying the commonest things. Very different from these is the manner of Arm-

strong. It is distinguished by its simplicity—by a free use of words which owe their strength to their plainness—by the rejection of ambitious ornaments, and a near approach to common phraseology. His sentences are generally short and easy, his sense clear and obvious. The full extent of his conceptions is taken at the first glance; and there are no lofty mysteries to be unravelled by repeated perusal. What keeps his language from being prosaic, is the vigour of his sentiments. He thinks boldly, feels strongly, and therefore expresses himself poetically. Where the subject sinks, his style sinks with it; but he has for the most part excluded topics incapable either of vivid description, or of the oratory of sentiment. He had from nature a musical ear, whence his lines are scarcely ever harsh, and are usually melodious, though apparently without much study to render them so. Perhaps he has not been careful enough to avoid the monotony of making several successive lines close with a rest or pause in the sense. On the whole, it may not be too much to assert, that no writer in blank verse can be found more free from stiffness and affectation, more energetic without harshness, and more dignified without formality.

AN ESSAY

ON THE

POEMS OF GREEN.

"MR. MATTHEW GREEN was of a family in good repute amongst the Dissenters, and had his education in the sect. He was a man of approved probity and sweetness of temper and manners. His wit abounded in conversation, and was never known to give the least offence. He had a post in the Custom House, and discharged the duty there with the utmost diligence and ability. He died at the age of forty-one years, at a lodging in Nag's Head Court, Gracechurch Street."—Dodsley's Collection of Poems, vol. 1.

In the productions of poetry, as in those of the other fine arts, not only is consummate excellence in every point which contributes to the perfection of a work extremely rare, but a high degree of it in any one of these points is not frequently to be met with. If, as has been done with respect to painting and music, a scale were to be framed for poetical merit, in which all the princi-

pal qualities belonging to the art, such as invention, versification, diction, pathos, and the like, were placed at the head of separate divisions with a number annexed denoting the *maximum* of each, —how few poets could be found who might fairly be said to have reached that highest degree even in one of these; how much fewer, who have approached it in several!

In considering such a scale, it might be a question whether the poet who stood at a medium height in all of the divisions, or he who was at the top in one or two, and near the bottom in the rest, were the *better artist;* but it could be no question whether the latter or the former were the *greater genius.* Excellence in one point will ever deserve a praise, to which mediocrity in many cannot arrive; and though its productions may afford less of the calm delight received from performances in which taste and skill secure moderate satisfaction and preclude disgust, yet they will better deserve the study and admiration of a true lover of the art.

It would be easy to enumerate various works of English poetry possessed of this partial or disproportionate excellence; and several of them maintain their place as acknowledged specimens of true genius, though perhaps they are more admired than read. But the celebrity of writers

depends much upon accidental circumstances; and if, in particular, we examine the share of fame obtained by our *minor poets*, whose performances have not *mass* enough to fill a considerable space in the public eye, we shall find it very far from commensurate with their proportion of merit. Besides the advantages bestowed by high patronage and connections, and the praise of cotemporaries of name and reputation, there are certain merits more obvious to the generality of readers than others of a superior order, as well as certain topics more popular and interesting than others. Thus it has happened, that the soft and harmonious elegies of Hammond, referring to a passion familiar to all the readers of poetry, and replete with sentiments pleasing and natural, though none of them original to the writer, and sometimes bordering on triteness and insipidity—have had much more fortune in the world than the pieces of Green, distinguished as they are by brilliancy and originality of thought, but singular in their subject and somewhat uncouth in their manner.

The writer before us was neither by education nor situation in life qualified to attain skill in those constituent parts of poetical composition upon which much of its elegance and beauty depend. He had not, like a Gray or a Collins, his

mind early fraught with all the stores of classic literature; nor could he devote months and years of learned leisure to the exquisite charms of versification or the refined ornaments of diction. He was a man of business, who had only the intervals of his regular employment to improve his mind by reading and reflection; and his poems appear to have been truly no more than hasty effusions for the amusement of himself and his particular friends. Numbers of works thus produced are born and die in the circle of every year; and it is only by the stamp of real genius that these have been preserved from a similar fate. But nature had bestowed on the author a strong and quick conception, and a wonderful power of bringing together remote ideas so as to produce the most novel and striking effects. No man ever thought more copiously or with more originality; no man ever less fell into the beaten track of common-place ideas and expressions. That cant of poetical phraseology which is the only resource of an ordinary writer, and which those of a superior class find it difficult to avoid, is scarcely any where to be met with in him. He has no hackneyed combinations of substantives and epithets; none of the tropes and figures of a schoolboy's Gradus. Often negligent, sometimes inaccurate, and not unfrequently prosaic, he redeems

his defects by a rapid variety of beauties and brilliancies all his own, and affords more food to the understanding or imagination in a line or a couplet, than common writers in half a page. In short, if in point of versification, regularity, and correctness, his place is scarcely assignable among the poets; in the rarer qualities of variety and vigor of sentiment, and novelty and liveliness of imagery, it would not be easy to find any, in modern times at least, who has a right to rank above him.

The longest and most elaborate of Mr. Green's compositions, and that by which he is best known, is an epistolary piece entitled The Spleen, of which the ingenious and elegant Mr. Melmoth has said "that there are more original thoughts thrown together than ever he had read in the same compass of lines." The writer calls it a motley performance, and apologizes for its want of method: a general subject may, however, be traced through it, which is, the art of attaining a tranquil state of mind, undisturbed by vexatious emotions and gloomy imaginations, and free from that mixture of listlessness and melancholy which has been denominated the Spleen. For this purpose, a sort of regimen for the soul is laid down, consisting chiefly in the practice of an easy good-humored philosophy, resembling that of Horace in his gay but sober mood, and comprising the

best practical Epicurean system that has, perhaps, ever been sketched out. To speculate upon the various scenes of human life without deeply engaging in them; to indulge the excursions of fancy, but to restrain conduct by the reins of prudence; to give free entrance to all amusive and agreeable objects, and carefully to exclude all of an opposite kind—are the principal heads of his didactic matter. But it appears to have been no small part of his design, to take the occasion his subject afforded, of bestowing strokes of satire *en passant*; at the same time that a fixed antipathy to those high claims upon our belief and acquiescence which cramp the exertions of reason and liberty, and a tendency to free speculation concerning theological topics, are sufficiently discernible throughout the piece. It is not the purpose of this Essay to give a moral or philosophical comment upon the author's system. Readers may take what they approve of it—and surely much *may* be approved—without embarrassing themselves about the rest. It is thus that Horace is read by all his rational admirers. Meantime, as all we know of Mr. Green authorizes us to believe that he led an innocent and useful life, we may conclude that *he*, at least, received no injury from his speculative tenets; deserving, on this account, a praise the opposite of that bestowed by Dr.

Johnson on some of the subjects of his biographical sketches, who are commended for the stedfastness with which they held orthodox opinions, in the midst of worthless and licentious lives.

To proceed to a more particular survey of the poem:—The author, after an introduction in which, with great truth, he disclaims plagiarism, represents his purpose to be, that of replying to his friend's question, "what method he took to keep off attacks of the Spleen, and preserve serenity through the storms of the world." He sets out with a novel and very appropriate image of this noxious being, whom he represents as holding a magic lanthorn, by means of which he throws frightful figures upon the scene of life—an idea thought worthy of being copied in one of the designs with which the poem has been decorated.

The corporeal regimen prescribed against the Spleen consists of temperance and exercise. The early hours of the hunter, whose sport he recommends, gives occasion to a spirited picture of morning freeing herself from the defilements of the night, and triumphantly mounting the skies, which affords a specimen of his talents for inventive description; as the well-known line concerning exercise,

Fling but a stone, the giant dies,

does of his singular turn for ingenious allusion.

A satirical and entertaining enumeration follows, of objects proper to dispel Spleen by the ridicule they excite. This is succeeded by a description of the effects of theatrical representations, and music, in harmonizing the soul;—which, however, cannot be much praised for originality. The description of a rainy day and its resources has more novelty; and the simile of the flying fish, with the allusions to the ark, and the manna of the Israelites, are striking specimens of the author's peculiar manner. It may be remarked respecting Green, (and I believe the remark would apply to many other writers educated among the Dissenters) that he abounds in references to scripture-history; a habit derived from early familiarity with those writings, which has not unfrequently survived any particular veneration for their authority.

There is much feeling as well as fancy in the testimony given to the power possessed by the fair sex in banishing intrusions of Spleen. The contrast of black eyes and blue eyes is very striking; and the allusion to the miracle of St. Januarius's head is one of the most ingenious in the piece. The succeeding grave censure on modern female education may suggest useful reflections; yet few, it may be supposed, will now concur in the advice to confine girls for their security within "the safe high wall of ignorance."

What to avoid, is the next topic of the author's friendly admonition. At the head of the particulars enumerated he places, properly enough, that species of religion which inculcates gloomy and desponding ideas. With no less prudence he cautions against going to law; and his allegory of a forest may by lawyers themselves be admitted to be happily sustained. In warning against party-strife, he takes occasion to characterise the two leading parties in church as they existed at his day. The contrast is drawn with truth and humor; but the force of his satirical wit is principally expended on the puritanical sect, the rigid and unamiable manners of which had very commonly the effect of disgusting most those who from birth and education took the nearest survey of them.

The nature and motives of the writer's present conformity are then explicitly stated. Not able to satisfy his doubts, he resorts to the laws for a decision, and goes "to Mecca with the caravan." As a consequence of such a principle, it is not extraordinary to find him renouncing all "reforming schemes," the end of which he seems to think absolutely unattainable, and therefore rather chooses to laugh at the follies of mankind, than run the hazard of making himself unhappy by "baffled zeal." In this conclusion he appears more consistent than he is in the subsequent exceptions

made in favor of a zeal for civil liberty and freedom of the press. But the fact probably was, that his original habits of thinking, as well as the prevailing spirit of the times, preserved his attachments to the latter, while scepticism and the practice of occasional conformity had subdued his regard for religious truth. The passage, however, in which he maintains the cause of liberty and knowledge, is striking and spirited; and there is much pregnant truth in the concluding remark, that they who apply the gag, always rob first.

He proceeds in his enumeration of the things to be avoided, as parents of disappointment and chagrin. A very lively and appropriate image of Fortune, or rather Court-favor, is given in the similitude of a figure sportively throwing the reflected light of a mirror into the eyes of a gaping crowd. Like many other poets, Green is a declaimer against his own art; and indulges in some lively strictures upon those who mistake a fond desire after poetical fame, for real talents, as well as upon those who support their claims to reputation by plagiarism and artifice. The denomination of "the hop-grounds of the brain" given to verse, is peculiarly happy. His praise of Glover, another *citizen-poet* of distinguished merit, is liberal and affectionate.

Quitting admonition and satire, he comes at

length to the direct means of procuring happiness in life; and having preluded with a rapturous address to contentment, he pours forth his sweetest strains, and the most pleasing effusions of his fancy, in a *wish*. Many poets have anticipated him in the indolent amusement of building castles in the air; but I know not if any one has been so successful in delineating a scene captivating to the lover of rural beauty and philosophic retirement. It is equally delightful as a piece of landscape painting, and as a moral portraiture; and the plan of life it lays down is a happy medium between that of the contemplative sage, and of the rational man of the world, who knows how to appreciate its comforts and enjoyments.

He next touches upon a higher topic, and with the seriousness of one friend addressing another displays his sentiments concerning the prospects of a future existence. Whatever be thought of his mode of philosophizing, it will not be denied that the whole passage is eminently distinguished by his characteristic vigor of expression and liveliness of fancy; and the spirited assertion of a free right to private judgement, uncontrouled by those who boast themselves "lords of the manor of the soul," will meet with the concurrence of all whom such a writer could in any degree expect to please.

The address to the Creator, suddenly checked by a consciousness of incapacity, and terminating in "mute praise and humble negatives," almost reaches the sublime.

The allegory representing human life as a voyage, with which the piece concludes, is an extremely hackneyed one. It may be traced through poets of various periods and nations; and, in particular, has been more than once employed by Horace, in passages in every one's memory. But perhaps it can no where be met with applied with so much exactness, and with such a variety of circumstances, as in the present instance. Reason sitting at the helm of the vessel, the Passions forming the crew, Philosophy putting forth the lights, Experience employing the glass and lead, the careening places of Bath and Tunbridge, and the dolphins sporting around, all together compose a wonderfully animated picture, clear in its conception, and happy in its resemblance.

Such is this singular poem on *the Spleen*, which few persons, it is imagined, will once read, without frequent re-perusals, every one of which will be repaid by new discoveries of uncommon and ingenious turns of thought. It possesses that undoubted mark of excellence, the faculty of impressing the memory with many of its strong sentiments

and original images: and perhaps not more lines of Hudibras itself have been retained by its admirers, than of this poem.

The Epigram on Echard's and Burnet's Histories, and The Sparrow and Diamond, are sprightly trifles, on which it is unnecessary to bestow any remarks.

The Seeker is a curious piece of theological painting in the humorous style, the figures of which many will recognise to be drawn from the life.

The poem on Barclay's Apology for the Quakers is written perfectly in the manner of the serious and philosophical part of The Spleen; and is, indeed, an admirable piece, clear and correct in its language, and full of original thoughts. The description of the retired votary, receiving in silence and self-annihilation the visitation of the spirit, is very striking and poetical, and renders solemn and impressive what has more commonly been represented in a ludicrous manner. The sentence,

> For so divine and pure a guest
> The emptiest rooms are furnish'd best,

is, indeed, capable of a sinister interpretation; but from the general air of the passage, he could not intend a sarcasm in this place; and the *emptiness* must mean no more than what proceeds from the temporary exclusion of external objects. Though

there is an occasional sportiveness in his manner, there seems no reason to doubt that he was in earnest in his approbation of the Quaker system, at least so far as to reckon it the nearest approach to pure christianity; and his allusion to the case of king Agrippa fairly displays the state of his mind. His apologies for not openly adopting the principles he approves, have all the appearance of sincerity, and are such as will touch the heart of every reader whose situation in life prevents him from acting up to his convictions. The honest confession,

> Like you I think, but cannot live

might become many characters of higher pretension than Mr. Green.

The most singular of our author's poems is entitled The Grotto, and was written on the erection of one of those edifices in Richmond Gardens by queen Caroline. It is not easy to say what sort of a poem such a subject should naturally produce; but we may be assured that from no other pen would it have produced any thing similar to the present. Yet, digressive as it is, we may discern a general design running through it, that of considering the grotto as

> A temple from vain glories free,
> Whose goddess is Philosophy;

an idea suggested as well by the character of the

elevated personage who built it, as by the busts of the great men with which it was furnished. This edifice is the same that Pope invidiously calls the "hermitage" in which Dr. Clark was improperly placed; but no one free from party prejudice will think that he disgraces his company. The variety of thoughts which our author has found means to connect by his plan is very extraordinary, and many of them are truly admirable, though we may sometimes "wonder how the devil they came there." The character of the heathen deities, and the necessity imputed to them of "recruiting from earth's first commoners," are excellent strokes of satire. The comparison of the insect tribe with the human race is lively, but one does not see what insects have peculiarly to do with a grotto.

One of the best and most appropriate passages is the enumeration of things which should, as it were, be exorcised from this sacred spot. Many of them are characterised with peculiar felicity, as scandal, adulation, spleen, and prophecy. The mention of Melancholy among the group, serves to bring in the writer's Delia, whom we may suppose to be some favorite fair, too much addicted to gloom and low spirits. She is made the vehicle of some very sprightly and poetical description, though perfectly digressive from the topic of the

piece. The comparison of the soul in a pensive fit to a sick linnet, and that of the tearful circle round the eye to a halo about the moon, are highly ingenious; and the enumeration of superstitious terrors is well conceived. Were we inclined to moralize on the occasion, it might be suggested, that this disposition to indulge in gloomy and terrific imaginations has been too much encouraged by some late works of fiction, which have delighted in painting with all the strength of pencil

> ——— in antique hall
> The moonlight monsters on the wall;
> And shadowy spectres darkly pass
> Trailing their sables o'er the grass.

After this excursion, the poet returns to his exorcism, forbidding the entrance of the grotto to various other inauspicious beings, among whom the bigot is well characterised, as confined to look one way only

> Through blinkers of authority.

He then invokes the proper nymph of the place, who seems to be the Urania mentioned in a former part of the piece, and allots her the fit companions, reason, religion, philosophy, and morals,—religion having first ceased "crusading against sense," and renewed her ancient alliance with philosophy.

He represents nature as smiling at the nymph's presence, and zephyr "playing with her curls instead of leaves." In conclusion, he raises the fair sex to the upper seats of the shrine, and pursues a very fanciful parallel between the female form and mind, and some of the phenomena of nature. The poem terminates with a just compliment to the royal founder of the grotto, who, though a queen, prized the friends of freedom, and canonized wise men, though a woman.

It appears that this piece was printed at its first composition, but not published. Probably the author was sensible that it was likely neither to be relished nor understood by the common readers of *grotto poetry*. Indeed, it is not calculated to give out its beauties, or its meaning, to a single perusal; yet it will amply repay a closer examination. Why it was to pass under the name of "a Fisherman of Brentford" is not apparent. Certainly, it is extremely remote from the simple and rustic character which would suit a supposed author of that class.

The poems of Green, which have hitherto appeared chiefly or solely in miscellaneous collections, do not seem favorably placed in them, since the reader, in the midst of a variety of light and agreeable pieces, is apt to overlook those of more thought and solidity, especially if they have any

thing forbidding in their first aspect. If their separate publication shall mark them out more pointedly to the lovers of English poetry, it is presumed that the writer's fame and the reader's pleasure will receive an equal accession.

A

CRITICAL ESSAY

ON

SOMERVILLE'S POEM

OF

THE CHACE.

THE true idea of a didactic poem being once established—that its real purpose is not to *teach*, but to *amuse* under the semblance of teaching—it will remain to be considered, what kinds of subjects afford the happiest themes for these compositions. The two great requisites appear to be, interest and variety. Without the former, the work will prove insipid; without the latter, tedious. The first point is secured by choosing a topic which is capable of rousing the passions, or, at least, of agitating the mind by lively emotions. The second is attained by frequent changes of scenery, and a due mixture of images derived from the senses and the understanding.

The subject of the poem before us will, it is presumed, be generally thought to possess both these advantages in no inconsiderable degree.

As far as instinctive propensities can be attributed to man, it may be asserted that he has ever, in almost all the different states of society in which he has been placed, exhibited a native passion for the chace; and he may, perhaps, be denominated a *hunting animal*, with as much propriety as the dog or the panther. Like the former of these, he receives delight from the chace itself, independently of the acquisition; for it is found, that no degree of plenty obtained by the labors of others, or by exertions of a different kind, has been able to subdue that ardor by which many are impelled to incur hardships, fatigues, and even dangers, in pursuit of an object, which would be perfectly trifling, were it not for the gratification experienced in the very pursuit. What but the chace (or war, which is an image of it,) can urge the rich man to forego the pleasures of luxurious indolence, and submit to privations and bodily sufferings which for a time put him upon a level with the lowest of his train?—while the poor man is equally prone to encounter hazards of all kinds for the sake of a participation in the same animating delights. M. de Saussure, in his travels among the Alps, giving an account of the dangerous sport of chamois-hunting, relates the following circumstance. "I knew a young man, of an engaging figure and countenance, just married to a

charming woman, who, in conversing upon this subject, said to me, My grandfather died in the chace, so did my father, and so persuaded am I that the same will be my destiny, that I call this sack which I take with me on my hunting expeditions, my winding-sheet, because I am certain I shall have no other. And yet, Sir, were you to offer to make my fortune on condition of my renouncing chamois-hunting, I would not comply." Within two years the poor man's prediction was verified. M. de Saussure, in accounting for this extraordinary passion, which could not be excited by any reasonable hopes of profit, justly attributes its power to the alternations of hope and fear, and the perpetual agitation of the mind from these strong emotions, which actuate the hunter as they do the gamester, the warrior, and the navigator.

With respect to the *variety* afforded by the chace as a subject for the poet, it is considerable, not only in direct description, but in digressive and incidental matter. The speculatist, who is inclined to take a wide range, may descant on various topics of philosophy and natural history connected with it; such as the separate powers of instinct and education in animals, the opposite laws of preservation and destruction in the economy of nature, the influence of climate and season, and the moral effects of the passion for

the chace. If to these be added, historical digressions relative to the manners of different stages of society and periods of the world with respect to this object, intermixed, perhaps, with a portion of mythology, which might without force be introduced, it will appear, that a poem on hunting may possess compass and elevation enough to prove interesting even to those who are not practically attached to the sports of the field.

The poem of Mr. Somerville, however, is much less a philosophical than it is a descriptive one. The writer was a real, not a speculative, sportsman; and it was not till fixed to his elbow-chair by infirmity, that he thought of writing on the chace, instead of following it. Classically educated, but, as it appears, with a mind not remarkably opened by habits of investigation, or elevated by images of the fancy, he has produced a piece, the principal excellence of which consists in pictures drawn from the life, and animated by the warm genuine feelings of the painter. The language, the sentiments, the incidents, all display perfect acquaintance with the scenes described ; and in hurrying from narration to narration, with little interposition of digressive and fanciful matter, he seems rather borne directly onward by his ardor for a favorite subject, than bounded by incapacity for excursive flights. By

his manner of writing he has certainly attained that which should be the principal aim of every writer, whether in verse or prose—he has deeply interested his reader in his descriptions, and has placed every thing before the imagination in the strong light and vivid colors of reality. But the merit of the work is not confined to truth and spirit alone. Its plan and arrangement are formed with competent skill; variety and contrast are studied with success; and the attempt, at least, to break the uniformity of description by the intermixture of sentiment and reflection has not been neglected.

To proceed to a more particular examination of the poem:—After a dedicatory address to the Prince of Wales, in strains sufficiently adulatory, the writer gives a slight sketch of the origin of hunting in times of barbarism, and of its introduction in a more polished form into this island. The brevity with which he passes over these topics, certainly not unfertile of poetical ideas, proves his impatience to quit speculation and conjecture for the realities of description. A short but spirited passage on the praises of Britain, next introduces the proposed subject of the work, declared in an address to the youth of hereditary landed property; and the poet feelingly alludes to his own situation, prevented by years and infirmities from

joining in the pleasures of the chace, but still recalling with delight his former triumphs, and pleased to point out to others the way to like renown.

The proper business of the book commences with a description of the dog-kennel, in which he soon exhibits his talent for accurate and lively painting, by representations of the pack issuing forth in the morning, oppressed by the fervor of noon, bathing in the cool stream, sporting with each other, and engaging in broils and combats. A particular and beautiful description of the hare hound or beagle succeeds, which is followed by a sketch of other kinds, adapted for different departments of the chace. This introduces a digression concerning the blood-hounds which were formerly kept on the Scottish border, and employed in detecting robbers. The picture of one of these at work in pursuing by the scent and at last detecting the felon, is highly animated. Hence the poet is naturally led to some philosophical discussion on the nature and cause of those effluvia which exercise the admirable sagacity of the canine species; and he concludes the book with showing the effects of atmospherical changes on the scenting power of dogs, and with some liberal sentiments concerning the advantages of a cultured mind in enabling a person to enjoy at home

those days which are unfit for the diversions of the field.

The second book opens with a philosophical subject, which the poet, had he been so disposed, might not unsuitably have pursued to a greater extent. It is the power of instinct in modifying the actions and habits of the brute creation. He contents himself, however, with instancing its effects in two animals, the roebuck and the hare. In speaking of the latter, he slides into a fuller description of its manners and mode of life, preparatory to the first grand picture in his work, that of a hare-hunt. A pleasing view of autumn, and a spirited sketch of the dawn of day, are the immediate preludes. The impatience of the fiery courser, and the ecstasy of the pack let loose from their kennel, and ready to begin the chace, are finely painted. The ensuing description receives peculiar value from its circumstantial minuteness; which, displayed in natural and energetic language, intermixed with bursts of genuine feeling, gives wonderful force and truth to the whole scenery. If any one compares the finished picture of a chace by Somerville, with the draughts by Thomson, formed upon general ideas, and interspersed with sentiment and reflection, he will be sensible of the great difference between writing upon a topic merely as belonging to a general subject,

and indulging in a favorite theme, which dwells on the mind in the vivid colors of memory and affection. It would be scarce possible even in prose to describe the hunting of the hare with more exactness than is here done; yet the language throughout is sufficiently elevated, and some of the passages are truly poetical. Such is that describing the *music of the chace*, and its fascinating effect upon all the hearers; well exemplifying the universality of that passion which urges men to partake of the hunter's pastime. Though there are touches in the representation which may call forth the emotions of pity in a feeling mind, yet the poet has judiciously refrained from enforcing them by moral sentiment and reflection, which would act in contradiction to his purpose. The effect of the opposite conduct of Thomson, in converting a joyous scene into a melancholy one, is obvious.

This humble though animated English hunting-piece is succeeded by a contrast, representing the chace in its utmost pomp and magnificence, with respect both to the persons engaged in it, and the objects. It is an eastern picture, copied from the relations of travellers; and to which, therefore, the writer has brought nothing but his acquired skill in poetical painting, with the enthusiasm inspired by a favorite subject. It is truly a grand

and noble piece, abounding in rich images and striking incidents, and wrought with great force and distinctness of coloring. Its character being, as it were, historical, there is little scope for strokes of the fancy; yet the effect of the martial music and shouts of the surrounding hunters upon the inclosed wild beasts, is conceived with true poetic imagination;

> ——— tygers fell
> Shrink at the noise; deep in his gloomy den
> The lion starts, and morsels yet unchewed
> Drop from his trembling jaws.

And the mutual rage of the encircled savages against each other, with their sudden tameness at the approach of their human foe, are striking ideas. If any objection lies against this splendid picture, it is, that being introduced thus early, it has a tendency to flatten and diminish the subsequent scenes. We shall see, however, that the poet has made the best use of his personal knowledge, to throw an interest, by force and clearness of circumstance, upon the home descriptions which he afterwards introduces.

The third book commences with the fox-chace, a subject which he seems to have labored more *con amore* than any other. It is, indeed, the capital scene of action to the English sportsman; for though the stag is a much nobler object of pursuit,

the chace of the fox more abounds with variety of incidents, and is a severer trial to the spirit of the hunters, and the perseverance of the dogs and horses. The brief account of the extirpation of the wolf, a kindred animal, from this island, forms an appropriate introduction. The casting off of the hounds, their working upon the scent, the unkennelling of the fox, his breaking away to the open country, and the full cry of the pack, are all highly animated pictures. In the pursuit, somewhat of the ludicrous is intermixed, together with some pathetic incidents, which last appear rather incongruous in a scene which is represented as inspiring "the madness of delight."

The notice taken of other modes of destroying this noxious animal, introduces a digression, in which are described the methods of taking the lion and the elephant in pitfalls, the curious manner of hunting the leopard by means of a mirror, and a wild-boar chace. All these pictures are copied from other authors, and of course are not enlivened with the spirit and circumstance of the British ones. Yet they afford an agreeable variety; and the draughts of the lion astonished by his fall into the pit, and of the elephant issuing majestically from his covert in the evening, are vigorously conceived.

The other capital picture of this book is that of

a stag-hunt in Windsor-forest. Though vastly inferior in magnificence to that of the Indian hunting before described, it is, however, drawn in a dignified style, and made to partake of the polish and splendor of a court. Such being its character, it is no wonder that the ardor and animation congenial to the chace when partaken of by equals, is somewhat kept down; and that a kind of awe and respect for the exalted personages who compose the principal figures takes place of the sportsman's rapture. This, too, is the only scene in which ladies are introduced as forming part of the group; whence gallantry has its share in the sentiments. But, much as we must admire the graceful form of the huntress, the *pensive* lover at her side makes rather an insipid figure. There is, however, considerable variety and interest in the events of the chace; and much diligence is employed to render the descriptions full and poetical. It concludes with a compliment to the sovereign on a supposed exertion of mercy in saving the life of the hunted animal; but the occasion is too trivial to justify the pomp of the sentiment.

The fourth book commences with a strain of philosophising, the drift of which it is not easy to discover. If the purpose were, to establish the position, that unless a pack of hounds be recruited with a young brood it will fall to decay, less effort

and solemnity would have sufficed : it serves, however, as an introduction to various didactic topics belonging to his general subject; such as, the mode of rearing a young progeny, the choice of those which are best worth preserving, and the discipline by which they are to be trained, all which are treated in an interesting manner. The character of the babbling and unsteady hound is well drawn; and the method of curing the propensity to worrying sheep forms a natural and humorous picture. Touching on the diseases of dogs, the poet is led to a particular description of that dreadful malady, canine madness, in which the contrasted figures of melancholy and fury in the animal subject are sketched with great force. In describing the hydrophobia in the human subject he seems not equally successful; and more knowledge of fact would have enabled him to render the draught more striking, without any mixture of fabulous circumstances. All this part of the fourth book would seem more naturally attached to the first, which treats of introductory matter; but the writer probably reserved it for this place, in order to break that continuity of hunting-pieces, which might otherwise have proved tiresome. The last picture of this kind is well discriminated from the rest by a change of scene to another element. The chace of the otter,

though an animal rather mean and inconsiderable, affords some very lively and amusing description. The view of a rivulet, and the various tribes of fish by which it is peopled, is truly beautiful; and there are some very picturesque touches in the watery landscape of the otter's retreat. It may be remarked, that though every former chace has contained full and rapturous descriptions of the "gallant chiding," the music of the hound and horn, the poet has been able in the present to repeat it with circumstances of novelty that give it striking effect.

The poem concludes with an imitation of Virgil's well-known praise of a rural life, in the second Georgic. The application, however, is less happy than in the original; for the poem of Somerville being professedly addressed to the heirs of great families, as those best qualified to enjoy the pleasures of the chace, there exists no real opposition between them and the possessors of opulence and splendor. It is true, he has, as much as possible, given it the turn of a contrast between town and country—between the ambitious courtier and the sportsman; but since, in fact, the fox-hunter in the country is often a politician in town, and hunting-matches are usually associated with party, the distinction is rather apparent than real. Further, the sports of the hunter are noisy, tumul-

tuous, attended with parade, and generally ending in conviviality; they ill accord, therefore, with the calm, retired, reflective disposition of the lover of nature and votary of philosophy. If these tastes were united in Somerville, it is certain that they are rarely found to be so in his brother-sportsmen. In reality, it is not among them that the admirers even of a poem on the chace are to be looked for. This work will chiefly be read by the readers of English poetry in general; and its chief merit will be, to have afforded them a source of pleasing novelty;—to have placed in their view a set of lively pictures, which will strike with the appearance of truth even those who are not practical judges of their subjects.

From what has been above remarked, the poetical character of Somerville will be easily deduced. He is strictly and almost solely a *descriptive* poet; and his talent lies in delineating actual scenes with fidelity and spirit, adorning them with the beauties of diction, but leaving them to act upon the imagination by their own force, without aid from the creations of fancy. In classical allusion he is not deficient, but it is of the more common kind; and little occurs in his writings that indicates a mind inspired by that exalted enthusiasm which denotes the genius of superior rank. His

versification is generally correct and well varied, and evidently flows from a nice and practised ear. His language is well suited to his subjects, rising and sinking with them, and free from that stiffness and affectation so commonly attendant upon blank verse. It more resembles that of Armstrong, than of Thomson or Akenside. Some of his other poems show him to have had a strong perception of the ludicrous; and in this, too, traits of humor are discernible. On the whole, Somerville occupies a respectable place among our native poets; and his *Chace* is probably the best performance upon that topic which any country has produced.

AN ESSAY

ON

THE POETRY

OF

GOLDSMITH.

AMONG those false opinions which, having once obtained currency, have been adopted without examination, may be reckoned the prevalent notion, that notwithstanding the improvement of this country in many species of literary composition, its poetical character has been on the decline ever since the supposed Augustan age of the beginning of the 18th century. No one poet, it is true, has fully succeeded to the laurel of Dryden or Pope; but if without prejudice we compare the minor poets of the present age (*minor*, I mean, with respect to the *quantity*, not the *quality*, of their productions) with those of any former period, we shall, I am convinced, find them greatly superior not only in taste and correctness, but in every other point of poetical excellence. The works of many late and present writers might be confi-

dently appealed to in proof of this assertion; but it will suffice to instance the author who is the subject of the present Essay; and I cannot for a moment hesitate to place the name of Goldsmith, as a poet, above that of Addison, Parnel, Tickel, Congreve, Landsdown, or any of those who fill the greater part of the voluminous collection of the *English Poets.* Of these, the main body has obtained a prescriptive right to the honor of classical writers, while their works, ranged on the shelves as necessary appendages to a modern library, are rarely taken down, and contribute very little to the stock of literary amusement. Whereas the pieces of Goldsmith are our familiar companions; and supply passages for recollection, when our minds are either composed to moral reflection, or warmed by strong emotions and elevated conceptions. There is, I acknowledge, much of habit and accident in the attachments we form to particular writers; yet I have little doubt, that if the lovers of English poetry were confined to a small selection of authors, Goldsmith would find a place in the favorite list of a great majority. And it is, I think, with much justice that a great modern critic has ever regarded this concurrence of public favor, as one of the least equivocal tests of uncommon merit. Some kinds of excellence, it is true, will more readily be recognised than

others; and this will not always be in proportion to the degree of mental power employed in the respective productions; but he who obtains general and lasting applause in any work of art, must have happily executed a design judiciously formed. This remark is of fundamental consequence in estimating the poetry of Goldsmith; because it will enable us to hold the balance steady, when it might be disposed to incline to the superior claims of a style of loftier pretension, and more brilliant reputation.

Compared with many poets of deserved eminence, Goldsmith will appear characterised by his *simplicity*. In his language will be found few of those figures which are supposed *of themselves* to constitute poetry;—no violent transpositions; no uncommon meanings and constructions; no epithets drawn from abstract and remote ideas; no coinage of new words by the ready mode of turning nouns into verbs; no bold prosopopœia, or audacious metaphor:—it scarcely contains an expression which might not be used in eloquent and descriptive prose. It is replete with imagery; but that imagery is drawn from obvious sources, and rather enforces the simple idea, than dazzles by new and unexpected ones. It rejects not common words and phrases; and, like the language of Dryden and Otway, is there-

by rendered the more forcible and pathetic. It is eminently nervous and concise; and hence affords numerous passages which dwell on the memory. With respect to his matter, it is taken from human life, and the objects of nature. It does not body forth things unknown, and create new beings. Its humbler purpose is to represent manners and characters as they really exist; to impress strongly on the heart moral and political sentiments; and to fill the imagination with a variety of pleasing or affecting objects selected from the stores of nature. If this be not the highest department of poetry, it has the advantage of being the most universally agreeable. To receive delight from the sublime fictions of Milton, the allegories of Spencer, the learning of Gray, and the fancy of Collins, the mind must have been prepared by a course of particular study; and perhaps, at a certain period of life, when the judgement exercises a severer scrutiny over the sallies of the imagination, the relish for artificial beauties will always abate, if not entirely desert us. But at every age, and with every degree of culture, correct and well-chosen representations of nature must please. We admire them when young; we recur to them when old; and they charm us till nothing longer can charm. Further, in forming a scale of excellence

for artists, we are not only to consider who works upon the noblest design, but who fills his design best. It is, in reality, but a poor excuse for a slovenly performer to say *magnis tamen excidit ausis;* and the addition of one master-piece of any kind to the stock of art, is a greater benefit, than that of a thousand abortive and mishapen wonders.

If Goldsmith then be referred to the class of *descriptive poets*, including the description of moral as well as of physical nature, it will next be important to inquire by what means he has attained the rank of a master in his class. Let us then observe how he has selected, combined, and contrasted his objects, with what truth and strength of coloring he has expressed them, and to what end and purpose.

As poetry and eloquence do not describe by an exact enumeration of every circumstance, it is necessary to *select* certain particulars which may excite a sufficiently distinct image of the thing to be represented. In this *selection*, the great art is to give *characteristic marks*, whereby the object may at once be recognised, without being obscured in a mass of common properties, which belong equally to many others. Hence the great superiority of *particular* images to *general* ones in descr ption: the former identify, while the

latter disguise. Thus all the hackneyed representations of the country, in the works of ordinary versifiers, in which groves, and rills, and flowery meads are introduced just as the rhyme and measure require, present nothing to the fancy but an indistinct daub of coloring, in which all the diversity of nature is lost and confounded. To catch the discriminating features, and present them bold and prominent, by few, but decisive strokes, is the talent of a master; and it will not be easy to produce a superior to Goldsmith in this respect. The mind is never in doubt as to the meaning of his figures, nor does it languish over the survey of trivial and unappropriated circumstances. All is alive—all is filled—yet all is clear.

The proper *combination* of objects refers to the impression they are calculated to make on the mind; and requires that they should harmonise, and reciprocally enforce and sustain each other's effect. They should unite in giving one leading tone to the imagination; and without a sameness of form, they should blend in an uniformity of hue. This, too, has very successfully been attended to by Goldsmith, who has not only sketched his single figures with truth and spirit, but has combined them into the most harmonious and impressive groups. Nor has any descriptive poet

better understood the great force of *contrast*, in setting off his scenes, and preventing any approach to wearisomeness by repetition of kindred objects. And with great skill, he has contrived that both parts of his contrast should conspire in producing one intended moral effect. Of all these excellencies, examples will be pointed out as we take a cursory view of the particular pieces.

In addition to the circumstances already noted, the *force* and *clearness* of representation depend also on the diction. It has already been observed that Goldsmith's language is remarkable for its general simplicity, and the direct and proper use of words. It has ornaments, but these are not far-fetched. The epithets employed are usually qualities strictly belonging to the subject, and the true coloring of the simple figure. They are frequently contrived to express a necessary circumstance in the description, and thus avoid the usual imputation of being expletive. Of this kind are, "the *rattling* terrors of the *vengeful* snake;" "*indurated* heart;" "shed *intolerable* day;" "*matted* woods;" "*ventrous* ploughshare;" "*equinoctial* fervors." The examples are not few of that indisputable mark of true poetic language, where a single word conveys an image; as in these instances: "resignation gently *slopes* the way;" "*scoops out* an empire;" "the vessel idly

waiting *flaps* with every gale;" "to *winnow* fragrance;" "murmurs *fluctuate* in the gale." All metaphor, indeed, does this in some degree; but where the accessory idea is either indistinct or incongruous, as frequently happens when it is introduced as an artifice to force language up to poetry, the effect is only a gaudy obscurity.

The *end* and *purpose* to which description is directed is what distinguishes a well-planned piece from a loose effusion; for though a vivid representation of striking objects will ever afford some pleasure, yet if aim and design be wanting, to give it a basis, and stamp it with the dignity of meaning, it will in a long performance prove flat and tiresome. But this is a want which cannot be charged on Goldsmith; for both the *Traveller* and the *Deserted Village* have a great moral in view, to which the whole of the description is made to tend. I do not now inquire into the legitimacy of the conclusions he has drawn from his premises; it is enough to justify his plans, that such a purpose is included in them.

The *versification* of Goldsmith is formed on the general model that has been adopted since the refinement of English poetry, and especially since the time of Pope. To manage rhyme couplets so as to produce a pleasing effect on the ear, has since that period been so common an attainment,

that it merits no particular admiration. Goldsmith may, I think, be said to have come up to the usual standard of proficiency in this respect, without having much surpassed it. A musical ear, and a familiarity with the best examples, have enabled him, without much apparent study, almost always to avoid defect, and very often to produce excellence. It is no censure of this poet to say that his versification presses less on the attention than his matter. In fact, he has none of those peculiarities of versifying, whether improvements or not, that some who aim at distinction in this point have adopted. He generally suspends or closes the sense at the end of the line or of the couplet; and therefore does not often give examples of that greater compass and variety of melody which is obtained by longer clauses, or by breaking the coincidences of the cadence of sound and meaning. He also studiously rejects triplets and alexandrines. But allowing for the want of these sources of variety, he has sufficiently avoided monotony; and in the usual flow of his measure, he has gratified the ear with as much change, as judiciously shifting the line-pauses can produce.

Having made these general observations on the nature of Goldsmith's poetry, I proceed to a survey of his principal pieces.

The *Traveller*, or *Prospect of Society*, was first sketched out by the author during a tour in Europe, great part of which he performed on foot, and in circumstances which afforded him the fullest means of becoming acquainted with the most numerous class in society, peculiarly termed *the people*. The date of the first edition is 1765. It begins in the gloomy mood natural to genius in distress, when wandering alone

> Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow.

After an affectionate and regretful glance to the peaceful seat of fraternal kindness, and some expressions of self-pity, the poet sits down amid Alpine solitudes to spend a pensive hour in meditating on the state of mankind. He finds that the natives of every land regard their own with preference; whence he is led to this proposition,—that if we impartially compare the advantages belonging to different countries, we shall conclude that an equal portion of good is dealt to all the human race. He further supposes, that every nation, having in view one peculiar species of happiness, models life to that alone; whence this favorite kind, pushed to an extreme, becomes a source of peculiar evils. To exemplify this by instances, is the business of the subsequent descriptive part of the piece.

Italy is the first country that comes under review. Its general landscape is painted by a few characteristic strokes, and the felicity of its climate is displayed in appropriate imagery. The revival of arts and commerce in Italy, and their subsequent decline, are next touched upon; and hence is derived the present disposition of the people—easily pleased with splendid trifles, the wrecks of their former grandeur; and sunk into an enfeebled moral and intellectual character, reducing them to the level of children.

From these he turns with a sort of disdain, to view a nobler race, hardened by a rigorous climate, and by the necessity of unabating toil. These are the *Swiss*, who find, in the equality of their condition, and their ignorance of other modes of life, a source of content which remedies the natural evils of their lot. There cannot be a more delightful picture than the poet has drawn of the Swiss peasant, going forth to his morning's labor, and returning at night to the bosom of domestic happiness. It sufficiently accounts for that *patriot passion* for which they have ever been so celebrated, and which is here described in lines that reach the heart, and is illustrated by a beautiful simile. But this state of life has also its disadvantages. The sources of enjoyment being few, a vacant listlessness is apt to creep upon the

breast; and if nature urges to throw this off by occasional bursts of pleasure, no stimulus can reach the purpose but gross sensual debauch. Their morals, too, like their enjoyments, are of a coarse texture. Some sterner virtues hold high dominion in their breasts, but all the gentler and more refined qualities of the heart, which soften and sweeten life, are exiled to milder climates.

To the more genial climate of *France* the Traveller next repairs, and in a very pleasing rural picture he introduces himself in the capacity of musician to a village party of dancers beside the murmuring Loire. The leading feature of this nation he represents as being the love of praise; which passion, while it inspires sentiments of honor, and a desire of pleasing, also affords a free course to folly, and nourishes vanity and ostentation. The soul, accustomed to depend for its happiness on foreign applause, shifts its principles with the change of fashion, and is a stranger to the value of self-approbation.

The strong contrast to this national character is sought in *Holland;* a most graphical description of the scenery presented by that singular country, introduces the moral portrait of the people. From the necessity of unceasing labor, induced by their peculiar circumstances, a habit of industry has been formed, of which the natural

consequence is a love of gain. The possession of exuberant wealth has given rise to the arts and conveniences of life; but at the same time has introduced a crafty, cold and mercenary temper, which sets every thing, even liberty itself, at a price. How different, exclaims the poet, from their Belgian ancestors! how different from the present race of Britain!

To Britain, then, he turns, and begins with a slight sketch of the country, in which, he says, the mildest charms of creation are combined,

> Extremes are only in the master's mind.

He then draws a very striking picture of a stern, thoughtful, independent freeman, a creature of reason, unfashioned by the common forms of life, and loose from all its ties;—and this he gives as the representative of the English character. A society formed by such unyielding self-dependent beings, will naturally be a scene of violent political contests, and ever in a ferment with party. And a still worse fate awaits it; for the ties of nature, duty, and love failing, the fictitious bonds of wealth and law must be employed to hold together such a reluctant association; whence the time may come, that valor, learning, and patriotism may all lie levelled in one sink of avarice. These are the ills of freedom; but the poet, who

would only repress to secure, goes on to deliver his ideas of the cause of such mischiefs, which he seems to place in the usurpations of aristocratical upon regal authority; and with great energy he expresses his indignation at the oppressions the poor suffer from their petty tyrants. This leads him to a kind of anticipation of the subject of his *Deserted Village*, where, laying aside the politician, and resuming the poet, he describes, by a few highly pathetic touches, the depopulated fields, the ruined village, and the poor forlorn inhabitants driven from their beloved home, and exposed to all the perils of the trans-atlantic wilderness. It is by no means my intention to enter into a discussion of Goldsmith's political opinions, which bear evident marks of confused notions and a heated imagination. I shall confine myself to a remark upon the English national character, which will apply to him in common with various other writers, native and foreign.

This country has long been in the possession of more unrestrained freedom of thinking and acting than any other perhaps that ever existed; a consequence of which has been, that all those peculiarities of character, which in other nations remain concealed in the general mass, have here stood forth prominent and conspicuous; and these being from their nature calculated to draw atten-

tion, have by superficial observers been mistaken for the general character of the people. This has been particularly the case with political distinction. From the publicity of all proceedings in the legislative part of our constitution, and the independence with which many act, all party differences are strongly marked, and public men take their side with openness and confidence. Public topics, too, are discussed by all ranks; and whatever seeds there are in any part of the society of spirit and activity, have full opportunity of germinating. But to imagine that these busy and high-spirited characters compose a majority of the community, or perhaps a much greater proportion than in other countries, is a delusion. This nation, as a body, is, like all others, characterised by circumstances in its situation; and a rich commercial people, long trained to society, inhabiting a climate where many things are necessary to the comfort of life, and under a government abounding with splendid distinctions, cannot possibly be a knot of philosophers and patriots.

To return from this digression. Though it is probable that few of Goldsmith's readers will be convinced, even from the instances he has himself produced, that the happiness of mankind is every where equal; yet all will feel the force of the truly philosophical sentiment which concludes

the piece,—that man's chief bliss is ever seated in his mind; and that a small part of real felicity consists in what human governments can either bestow or withhold.

The *Deserted Village*, first printed in 1769, is the companion-piece of the *Traveller*, formed, like it, upon a plan which unites description with sentiment, and employs both in inculcating a political moral. It is a view of the prosperous and ruined state of a country village, with reflections on the causes of both. Such it may be defined in prose; but the disposition, management and coloring of the piece, are all calculated for poetical effect. It begins with a delightful picture of Auburn when inhabited by a happy people. The view of the village itself, and the rural occupations and pastimes of its simple natives, is in the best style of painting by a selection of characteristic circumstances. It is immediately contrasted by a similar bold sketch of its ruined and desolated condition. Then succeeds an imaginary state of England, in a kind of golden age of equality; with its contrast likewise. The apostrophe that follows, the personal complaint of the poet, and the portrait of a sage in retirement, are sweetly sentimental touches, that break the continuity of description.

He returns to Auburn, and having premised

another masterly sketch of its two states, in which the images are chiefly drawn from sounds, he proceeds to what may be called the interior history of the village. In his first figure he has tried his strength with Dryden. The *parish-priest* of that great poet, improved from Chaucer, is a portrait full of beauty, but drawn in a loose unequal manner, with the flowing vein of digressive thought and imagery that stamps his style. The subject of the draught, too, is considerably different from that of Goldsmith, having more of the ascetic and mortified cast, in conformity to the saintly model of the Roman Catholic priesthood. The pastor of Auburn is more *human*, but is not on that account a less venerable and interesting figure; though I know not whether all will be pleased with his familiarity with vicious characters, which goes beyond the purpose of mere reformation. The description of him in his professional character is truly admirable; and the similes of the bird instructing his young to fly, and the tall cliff rising above the storm, have been universally applauded. The first, I believe, is original;—the second is not so, though it has probably never been so well drawn and applied. The subsequent sketches of the village schoolmaster and the alehouse are close imitations of nature in low life, like the pictures of Teniers and

Hogarth. Yet even these humorous scenes slide imperceptibly into sentiment and pathos; and the comparison of the simple pleasures of the poor, with the splendid festivities of the opulent, rises to the highest style of moral poetry. Who has not felt the force of that reflection,

> The heart distrusting asks, if this be joy?

The writer then falls into a strain of reasoning against luxury and superfluous wealth, in which the sober inquirer will find much serious truth, though mixed with poetical exaggeration. The description of the contrasted scenes of magnificence and misery in a great metropolis, closed by the pathetic figure of the forlorn ruined female, is not to be surpassed.

Were not the subjects of Goldsmith's description so skilfully varied, the uniformity of manner, consisting in an enumeration of single circumstances, generally depicted in single lines, might tire; but where is the reader who can avoid being hurried along by the swift current of imagery, when to such a passage as the last, succeeds a landscape fraught with all the sublime terrors of the torrid zone;—and then, an exquisitely tender history-piece of the departure of the villagers; concluded with a groupe (slightly touched, indeed) of allegorical personages? A

noble address to the genius of poetry, in which is compressed the moral of the whole, gives a dignified finishing to the work.

If we compare these two principal poems of Goldsmith, we may say, that the *Traveller* is formed upon a more regular plan, has a higher purpose in view, more abounds in thought, and in the expression of moral and philosophical ideas; the *Deserted Village* has more imagery, more variety, more pathos, more of the peculiar character of poetry. In the first, the moral and natural descriptions are more general and elevated; in the second, they are more particular and interesting. Both are truly original productions; but the *Deserted Village* has less peculiarity, and indeed has given rise to imitations which may stand in some parallel with it; while the *Traveller* remains an *unique*.

With regard to Goldsmith's other poems, a few remarks will suffice. The *Hermit*, printed in the same year with the *Traveller*, has been a very popular piece, as might be expected of a tender tale prettily told. It is called a *ballad*, but I think with no correct application of that term, which properly means a story related in language either naturally or affectedly rude and simple. It has been a sort of fashion to admire these productions; yet in the really ancient ballads, for

one stroke of beauty, there are pages of insipidity and vulgarity; and the imitations have been pleasing in proportion as they approached more finished compositions. In Goldsmith's *Hermit*, the language is always polished, and often ornamented. The best things in it are some neat turns of moral and pathetic sentiment, given with a simple conciseness that fits them for being retained in the memory. As to the story, it has little fancy or contrivance to recommend it.

We have already seen that Goldsmith possessed humor; and, exclusively of his comedies, pieces professedly humorous form a part of his poetical remains. His imitations of Swift are happy, but they *are* imitations. His tale of the *Double Transformation* may vie with those of Prior. His own natural vein of easy humor flows freely in his *Haunch of Venison* and *Retaliation*; the first, an admirable specimen of a very ludicrous story made out of a common incident by the help of conversation and character; the other, an original thought, in which his talent at drawing portraits, with a mixture of the serious and the comic, is most happily displayed.

MISCELLANEOUS PIECES.

APHORISMS ON MIND AND MANNERS.

HE who, after a loss, immediately, without staying to lament it, sets about repairing it, has that within himself which can control fortune.

The youth who can sneer at exalted virtue, needs not wait for age and experience to commence a consummate knave.

He whose first emotion on the view of an excellent production, is to undervalue it, will never have one of his own to show.

The conscious merit of true ability, never goes further than "I too am a painter."

The hardest trial of the heart is, whether it can bear a rival's failure without triumph.

Him whom descrying at a distance, you turn out of the way to avoid, you may call your friend or benefactor, but you do not love.

He, who begins life with "*Nil admirari*," will end it "*Epicuri de grege porcus*."

The man who, improving in skill or knowledge, improves in modesty, has an undeniable claim to greatness of mind.

Bravely to contend for a good cause is noble—silently to suffer for it, is heroical.

Would a man of rank estimate his real dignity, let him conceive himself in a state in which all rank is abolished.

All professions, it is said, have their mysteries—these are precisely the points in which consists their weakness or knavery.

To choose a good book, look in an inquisitor's prohibited list—to choose a good cause, see which interested men dislike.

There are three sights most detestable:—a proud priest giving his blessing,—a knavish hypocrite saying his prayers,—and a false patriot making an harangue.

Who says *hypocritical*, says all that is despicable in morals:—who says *affected*, says all that is odious in manners.

Columbus steering steadily westward for a land seen only by the eye of his reason, was one of the greatest of human characters:—a projector obstinately ruining himself in pursuit of a visionary scheme, may be one of the foolishest, but certainly not of the lowest.

Thoroughly to try a man's patience, he must have the labor of years consumed before his eyes in a moment:—thoroughly to prove it, he must instantly begin to renew his labor.

The woman of sensibility, who preserves serenity and good temper, amid the insults of a faithless brutal husband, wants nothing of an angel but immortality.

The woman who rises above sickness and poverty combined, may look down upon the noisy heroism of kings and generals.

Better to be moved by false glory, than not moved at all.

Nothing is such an obstacle to the production of *excellence*, as the power of producing what is *pretty good* with ease and rapidity.

As reasonably expect oaks from a mushroom bed, as great and durable products from small and hasty efforts.

Every work of great genius, and every work of great care and industry, will have its value; but mediocrity, with negligence, gives products of no value at all.

WHAT MAN IS MADE FOR.

SOON after the marriage of the dauphin and dauphiness of France (the late unfortunate Louis XVI. and Antoinette), when all the conversation ran upon the splendid fire-works exhibited at their nuptials, a friend of mine, happening to be at Paris, was much amused with a circumstance to which he was witness, in a room full of company. A boy, about seven years old, possessed of rather more than an ordinary degree of that forward vivacity which is so characteristic of the youthful part of the French nation, was haranguing, in the midst of the circle, with great volubility and emphasis, on the subject of fire-works, and giving a description of what he conceived would make a perfect spectacle of that kind. But while he was painting, with all his eloquence, the immense volumes of flame, and prodigious explosions, that filled his imagination, a bystander ventured to observe, that all the people employed about them

would be in danger of being blown to pieces. "*Ah*, (says the boy, with a *nonchalance* worthy of the *privileged orders*)—*Ah, ils sont faits pour cela*," —"It is what they are made for."

This expression has often come into my mind, on reflecting upon the destiny of the great bulk of mankind, in all past, and in the present periods; I have wished, if possible, to satisfy myself, what, in reality, the human race was made for? and I confess, willing as I am to entertain better hopes, I cannot discover, from any principles of philosophising, so sure a ground for reasoning concerning the future condition of mankind, as the uniform experience of some thousands of past years. If I breed up a horse for the course, or a dog for the chace, or a game-cock for the pit, it is because a long course of experiments has convinced me that such is the *nature* of those animals, and that I am pretty sure of finding in the progeny those qualities and dispositions which I remarked in the parents. May not then a king of Prussia, with equal reason, train a number of two-legged unfeathered creatures, called *men*, to pillage, enslave, and murder other men, at the word of command, in the confidence, that as the experiment succeeded with Sesostris, Cyrus, Alexander, Cæsar, Gengiskan, Tamerlane, Charles, Louis, and a great many more *men-masters*, it will

so asucceed with him;—in other words, as the French boy said, that "*ils sont faits pour cela?*"

Further—Man is a creature of strong appetites and passions. These are evolved in him earlier than the principles of reason and understanding, and, in much the greater part of the species, they continue to take the lead during life. Sensual pleasures have attractions for all men; and it is only that class who, by means of the bodily labor of the majority, are able to live in comparative ease and leisure, that can acquire a relish for intellectual enjoyments. Now, the more numerous mankind become, the more sedulous must be their exertions to procure the *necessaries* of life, which must ever be the first concern. The more refinement and luxury prevail among the higher classes, the greater proportion of the lower must devote the whole of their time to labor, in a variety of new modes. Even the improvements in arts and sciences require the additional manual toil of inferior artists; and the ingenuity of one head sets at work a thousand pair of hands. What is implied by the sublime discoveries of a Herschel? —the existence of the collier, miner, forgeman, smith, brazier, glassmaker and grinder, carpenter, &c. &c. all of whom must be hard-working men, living in garrets or cellars, drinking porter and drams, when they can get them, and placing their

summum bonum in a hot supper and a warm bed. This is *what they are made for*. And when the government under which they live, and of which they must always be *subjects*, not *members*, chooses to quarrel with a neighbouring state, about the right of fishing or trading on the other side of the globe, or some equally worthy matter of debate, these very men must be compelled or debauched to clap an uniform on their backs, and a musket on their shoulders, and learn to kill and be killed, at the word of command—for this, too, is *what they are made for*.

An acquaintance of mine, who is fond of the Linnæan mode of characterising objects of natural history, has amused himself with drawing up the following definition of man :—

Simia *Homo:* sine caude : pedibus posticis ambulans : gregarium, omnivorum, inquietum, mendax, furax, rapax, salax, pugnax, artium variarum capax, animalium reliquorum hostis, sui ipsius inimicus acerrimus.

ON THE TOUCH FOR THE KING'S EVIL.

I CONFESS myself to be one of those, whom a pretty long experience of mankind has not tended to render highly enamoured of the species, or very confident of its progress towards melioration. I think I see the same radical defects of character prevailing in all periods, and through all external circumstances; and though diversely modified, yet ever operating to produce the principal part of the evils under which the human race continually labors. In particular, the disposition *to deceive and to be deceived*, appears to me always in full operation in all societies, whether savage or civilized; and, since much of the weakness and unhappiness, if not of the vice, of men, proceeds from this source, I conceive that to detect and counteract it, will ever be one of the best services that a thinking mind can render its fellow-creatures. An instance having occurred to me in my reading, which I think remarkably well calculated

to display the joint action of fraud and credulity, with respect to a very common object of superstition,—that of the miraculous cure of disease,—I propose to lay it before the public, together with the remarks which it has suggested to me.

Those who have endeavoured to support the reality of the efficacy of the *royal touch*, in the cure of the scrophula, or king's-evil, have laid particular stress on the testimony of Wiseman. This person was serjeant-surgeon to Charles II.; of high reputation in his profession, and the author of a work in surgery, long reckoned a standard performance, and which shows him to have been a fair and modest man, as well as an excellent practitioner. It contains an express treatise on the king's-evil, in which he speaks of the *touch*, in the following strong terms: "I, myself, have been a frequent eye-witness of many hundreds of cures performed by his majesty's touch alone, without any assistance of chirurgery; and those, many of them, such as had tired out the endeavours of able chirurgeons before they came thither. It were endless to recite what I myself have seen, and what I have received acknowledgments of, by letter, not only from the several parts of this nation, but also from Ireland, Scotland, Jersey, and Germany." Is it possible for

a testimony to be more direct and positive, or to proceed from a more competent witness? Yet, probably, there is scarcely at present a man in England who is not convinced that the whole pretension was a falsehood (for *that* imposture is now worn out). How then are we to account for Wiseman's conduct? Was he himself deceived, or did he knowingly lend his aid to carry on a cheat? Both suppositions have their difficulties, yet both are in some degree probable. His warm attachment to the royal family, and early prejudices, might inspire him with a faith beyond the controul of his judgement. On the other hand, certain passages in this treatise show a necessary consciousness of collusion, and are, indeed, the true confutation of that above quoted, which otherwise might stagger one who judged from direct evidence alone.

It was his office, as serjeant-surgeon, to select such afflicted objects, as were proper to be presented for the royal touch. In the history of the disease, when describing its various states and appearances, he says, "Those which we present to his majesty, are chiefly such as have this sort of tumor about the musculus mastoideus, or neck, with whatever circumstances they are accompanied; nor are we difficult in admitting, the thick chapped upper lips, and eyes afflicted with a lip-

pitudo: *in other cases we give our judgement more warily.*" Here is a selection of the slightest cases, which most readily undergo a spontaneous alteration, and a manifest doubt expressed concerning the success in more inveterate ones. A little below, observing that the strumæ will often suppurate, or be resolved unexpectedly from accidental ferments, he says, "In case of the king's touch, the resolution doth often happen, where our endeavours have signified nothing; yea, the very gummata, insomuch that I am cautious of predicting concerning them (though they appear never so bad) till fourteen days be over." From this passage we may infer, that the touch was by no means infallible, and that the pretence of its succeeding was not given up, till a fortnight had elapsed without any change for the better.

Indeed, it appears very evident, that the worst kind of cases were seldom or never offered to the *touch;* for in no disease does Wiseman adduce more examples from his own practice of difficult and tedious chirurgical treatment, nor do we find, that in one of these he called in the aid of the royal hand. It was proposed in a single instance: but under circumstances that furnish a stronger proof of imposture, than any thing yet mentioned. A young gentlewoman had an obstinate scrophulous tumor in the right side of the neck, under

the jaw; Wiseman applied a large caustic to it, brought it to suppuration, treated it with escharotics, and cured it. "About a year after," says he, "I saw her again in town, and felt a small gland of the bigness of a lupin, lying lower on that side of the neck. I would have persuaded her to admit of a resolvent emplaster, and *to be touched;* but she did not, as she said, believe it to be the king's-evil." Here, after allowing his patient to undergo a course of very severe surgery, he is willing to trust the relics of the disease to the *royal touch*, assisted by a *resolving plaster;* but the complaint was now too trifling to engage her attention. Surely, the greatest opponent of the *touch* could not place it in a more contemptible light.

Thus do the boldest assertions of wonderful and supernatural occurrences, shrink into nothing before a patient and critical examination; and thus inconsistent with itself is an extravagant pretension ever found to be. It was enough to refute the impudent claims of the alchemists, that these pretended gold-makers were beggars in rags; as it is a very convincing proof, that the royal touch cannot cure the king's-evil, when it becomes the evil of kings.

In order fully to prove the reality of an extraordinary cure, three points of evidence are neces-

sary :—that the disease existed, that it was cured, and that the alleged means were what alone performed the cure. But how seldom have these concurred in an authentic form, to establish a wonderful tale of this kind! Yet men are still the dupes of their own credulity; and who can foresee an end to this delusion?

LITERARY PROPHECIES FOR 1797.

I DISCERN in embryo three new tragedies, five comedies, and six musical entertainments for the London Theatres. The tragedies will be splendid, stately, and abundantly loyal—they will be praised in the papers till nobody goes to see them. The comedies will be partly sentiment, partly farce; and two of them, at least, by the efforts of the actors for whom they are written, will be preserved from oblivion till the year 1798. The musical pieces will certainly expire with the almanacs.

A new imposition will be practised on the black-letter gentlemen with some success; but the hero, this year, will not be Shakspeare, nor will a six shilling book be written, after its detection, to prove that it ought to have been believed.

The controversy about the talents of women, will give birth to two bulky volumes, from a female pen; which will, at least, prove that light-

ness and vivacity are not, as has been supposed, characteristic of the writers of that sex.

The Oxford University press will this year be chiefly employed in printing catechisms for the use of French emigrants and their converts; yet some progress will be made in re-editing a German edition of a forgotten classic.—N.B. Dr. Bradley's astronomical papers will *not* appear this year.

The alliance of church and state, and the consanguinity of *all* religions, will be ably supported by an eminent divine, in full prospect of a seat on the episcopal bench.

The political world will be thrown into a strange ferment towards the end of autumn, by an extraordinary publication of an extraordinary character, containing a renunciation of all former principles. I am sorry that the delicate nature of the subject obliges me, in this instance, to adopt somewhat of the ambiguous language of other prophets.

The elegant press of Bulmer will, this year, send forth a Collection of *the Puerile Poetry of England;* wherein the popular compositions of "Hey my kitten, my kitten;" "Jack and Gill went up the hill;" "There were three crows they sat on a stone;" and a variety of the like kind, will be carefully edited and illustrated with his-

torical and critical notes, by a learned member of the Society of Antiquaries. Vignettes, head and tail pieces, and designs, by a lady of quality, as usual.

Two Pindaric Odes, by a hackney coachman; a Collection of Sentimental Sonnets, by a washerwoman; and an Epic Poem, in twenty books, by a printer's devil, composed in types, instead of being committed to paper, will agreeably entertain the lovers of poetry.

An infallible method of cure for the yellow fever, which wants only a trial beyond the Atlantic to demonstrate its efficacy, will be communicated to the public by a young graduate from Scotland.

A new project of nutrition, by inhaling the gases of bakers', cheesemongers', and cooks' shops, will administer *food* to the pneumatic speculators.

I see this moment on the road from Edinburgh, two bulky MSS., one, an absolutely new Theory of the Human Understanding; the other, a Complete History of the Proceedings of one of the Provincial Synods ever since the Reformation: but whether any bookseller will be found to undertake their publication, my art does not positively inform me.

A novel, by a lady, will make some noise; in

which the heroine begins by committing a rape, and ends with killing her man in a duel.

A Proposal for a Reform in Law-proceedings, published under the name of an eminent barrister, will greatly astonish the gentlemen of the long robe, and occasion much debate as to its authenticity, till a statute of lunacy taken out against the author will clear up the matter.

REMARKS

ON

THE CHARGE OF JACOBINISM.

IT has at all times been so common an artifice of party to stigmatise its adversaries by some opprobrious name, that particular examples of the fact may be deemed unworthy of notice. Yet, where individuals actually suffer from the impudent licentiousness with which this is done, and obnoxious ideas are associated in the public mind which have not the least real connection, some appeal to truth and reason, on the part of the injured, is natural, if not necessary. I conceive this at present to be the case with respect to the charge of *Jacobinism*, so industriously brought forward on all occasions, by a certain set of writers, against all who disapprove of the measures of ministers, however differing from each other in political principles, and however free the greater part may be from any designs which can justify such an imputation.

Every one acquainted with the history of the

French Revolution must know, that a club called the *Jacobins*, from the place of their meeting in Paris, connected with a number of others throughout the kingdom, openly attempted to overcome the legal representatives of the nation, to overturn a constitution established by general consent, and to involve every thing in anarchy and confusion, that no obstacle might exist to their schemes. The essence of *Jacobinism*, according to its true signification, then is—

To hold that a majority may lawfully be governed by a minority, upon the pretext of the public good:

To pay no regard to the will of the nation, as declared by those who have been fairly delegated for the purpose:

To scruple no means, however base or violent, to compass a political end:

To consider absolute anarchy, and the destruction of all natural and civil rights, as a cheap purchase for speculative improvements in a constitution.

I am sure I have no objection that every man in this kingdom, who avows, either in word or action, these principles, should by name be exposed as a Jacobin to the hatred and suspicion of his fellow-citizens.

But it is *not Jacobinism* to maintain—

That government was instituted for the good of the many, not the emolument of the few:

That there at all times exists, in the majority of a political society, a right of making such alterations in their form of government, as upon mature deliberation they shall think conducive to the public welfare:

That privileged bodies derive all title to their privileges from the consent and advantage of the whole:

That, therefore, wars and public burdens for the particular interest of those bodies are a public injustice:

That a friend of mankind may wish well to the cause of liberty all over the globe, without waiting for the permission of his own partial or prejudiced countrymen.

Finally, *Republicanism*, the spirit of which is, in fact, the very essence of every thing free in political constitutions, is not *Jacobinism*, but the very reverse.

ON THE PROBABILITY OF A FUTURE MELIORATION IN THE STATE OF MANKIND.

THAT man, who, during the course of a few late years, has not made very serious reflections on the condition and prospects of his fellow-creatures; who has not been agitated with alternate hopes and fears, and felt his wishes and expectations in a state of perpetual tumult and fluctuation, must either have been absorbed in stupid and selfish indifference, or must have arrived at that state of security concerning all human affairs which is the highest point of philosophy. For my own part, I have been far from either of those conditions. I have most ardently sympathised in the surrounding scenes; but from the present view of things, I could wish that the tranquillity arising not from indifference, but from philosophy, should succeed to the painful suspense and uneasy apprehensions of a mind too strongly impressed by actual events. This, too, may probably be the

state of many others. Let us then see, if, by meditating on the past and present state of mankind, we can discover any principles which may reconcile us to what we behold, and secure us for the future against the folly and the pain of expectations never likely to be gratified.

The human race has now subsisted some thousand years, and under all the differences of climate and external circumstances that can be supposed incident to it. With respect to what we call *civilization*, likewise, it seems to have undergone all the vicissitudes of which it is capable; for this has in a great many instances been carried to a degree, which seems to have been the direct cause of its own decline. States more commercial, more military, more polished, more luxurious, than have already existed, are not likely again to appear on the theatre of the world. What then remains on which to found expectations of a new state of things, unless it be *knowledge?* This, in fact, is the present anchor of our hopes for a meliorated condition of mankind; it is therefore a matter of high importance to consider what that improvement in knowledge must be which is to effect this desirable change, and what are the probabilities of its taking place.

Knowledge may, in a loose way, be divided into that which is a source of happiness in itself,

and that which is a means of producing happiness. With respect to the former, inasmuch as it contributes to the enjoyment of individuals by affording interesting and agreeable occupations for their leisure, and by dignifying and exalting their natures, it cannot, I fear, be made a ground of much advantage to the great mass of mankind. For too few in society can ever possess leisure and opportunity sufficient for the pursuit, or, if they have these, will prefer the pleasures of knowledge to the more obvious ones flowing from the affections and the senses, to render advances in literature and science the source of much substantial benefit to the world. It may be added, that as it is *pursuit* and *progress*, rather than real attainment of any precise objects, which gives the pleasure in this case, an *advanced* state of knowledge is not more favorable than an *early* and *immature* one, to the happiness of its votaries. Whatever may be the modern improvements in physics and metaphysics, the ardor, and consequently the delight, with which they are pursued, cannot now be much greater than that felt by the philosophers of antiquity.

The other species of knowledge is to be regarded as a means to an end; and, from the nature of mankind, formed capable of transmitting the experience and discoveries of one generation to an-

other, and thus making unlimited progress in the adaptation of the fittest means to the best ends, we may very reasonably expect an addition to the stock of general good from this source. But, in order to form some estimate of its amount, it will be first necessary to consider of what ingredients human happiness is composed, and how far it lies within the power of man to add to or diminish the general sum.

There is, indeed, an opinion that many seem fond of maintaining, which, if true, would render unnecessary every consideration of this sort, and induce us to sit down in perfect apathy: this is, that good and evil are so equally balanced in all the different states and conditions of mankind, that what is gained on one side, is lost on the other, and *vice versâ;* so that it can never be worth while to attempt a melioration, by which nothing can be really acquired in point of happiness. And if happiness be the true end and object of our being, it is certain that a change, which does not conduce to its augmentation, is but an idle waste of our industry. But, surely, a fair and impartial survey of the world can never lead to such a conclusion. Place happiness as low as we please—let it consist in mere animal enjoyments, and that security of life and its comforts, and that freedom of action, which even a savage must

prize—and we cannot be insensible of the superior advantages which some states of society offer in these respects, over others. It is impossible for any one seriously to suppose, that the American or English farmer, surrounded with plenty, which no one can hinder him from enjoying, and resting in full peace and tranquillity under the protection of strong and equal laws, is not a happier being than the cultivator of the Turkish dominions, who is forced to hide the little wealth he possesses, lest it should be forcibly taken from him; and fears a brutal and insolent foe in the person of every one stronger or better armed than himself. The difference here is nothing less than fanciful—it bears upon the solid comfort of every day, and comes home to the feelings of every human creature.

The happiness of man, as far as it applies to the whole species, will probably never admit of a high or complex estimate. Sensual gratifications, and the ordinary pleasures of social and domestic life, may be reckoned to compose almost the whole of it. As already observed, the wants of mankind are too many to allow to the majority leisure enough for intellectual pursuits; nor are the enjoyments arising from that source, so strong and constant in their attraction, as those from the two former. I have, therefore, no idea of a higher

degree of happiness, attainable by a community, than that proceeding from abundance of the necessaries and most obvious conveniencies of life, fairly shared, aud temperately used; from peace, security, freedom of action, and mutual kindness and good offices. To these may be added, immunity from those superstitious terrors, and self-tormenting practices, which have attended so many forms of false religion. Now let us inquire how far the increase of knowledge accruing from experience, is likely to further these desirable objects among the great family of mankind.

Not much need be said concerning the improvements in the common arts of life in this view. Being almost all of them the offspring of necessity, they can scarcely do more than keep pace with the demands of that necessity. Such is the natural increase of the human species when not checked by unfavorable circumstances, that there will be perpetual occasion for the full employment of the human abilities to prevent the share of good things already possessed by each individual from being diminished. The utmost improvement of agriculture can only give wholesome and palatable food to greater numbers than are now fed from the same extent of land: the like may be said of all other branches of economics and manufactures, at least in every country

where already enough has been discovered to make life comfortable. Most countries in Europe might probably maintain a much larger population than they possess; but what has the sum of population to do with the happiness of the individuals which compose it? This has long ago in China and Japan reached its *maximum*, and in its consequences has pushed the more essential arts of life to a degree of perfection much beyond what we see among ourselves; but it seems to have been very far from meliorating the condition of the species.

A much more promising consequence of increased knowledge, is the improvement to be expected from it in government, legislation, and all the contrivances by which a community are secured in the enjoyment of those advantages which nature and industry bestow. Here seems, indeed, to be a wide and almost boundless field for melioration; for old as the world is, how very few examples has it yet seen of civil institutions, purely and fairly framed with a view to the production of the greatest possible good! How difficult it would be to name a single one in which partial interests have not, in many important points, taken the lead of general interests! But, in order to know what improvements may be expected in this matter, it will be necessary to con-

sider what errors have been owing to *ignorance*, and what to *ill intention*. The former may perhaps admit a cure; the latter hardly can, unless the majority become so enlightened concerning their interests, and so wise, steady, and unanimous in the pursuit of them, as to overcome all that resistance which the possessors of undue advantages will always make to a change unfavorable to themselves.

That ignorance on the part of rulers, in the true principles of legislation, police, and the other branches of government, has been, and is, the cause of much evil to nations, cannot be doubted. And as it must be, upon the whole, the interest of rulers to see their subjects flourishing and happy enough to be kept in good humor, there seems no reason to doubt, that in proportion as prejudices and false conceptions give way to the gradual progress of truth, many improvements will be made in these particulars which will materially better the state of mankind. I make no question but much has been done during the course of the present century, to amend the distribution of private justice, to check the oppression of the great, and to secure life and property to all the members of a state, in almost every country in Europe. Industry has been more encouraged, trade freed from many impolitic shackles, punishments ren-

dered less cruel, and, in general, a more just and liberal spirit of internal government has been introduced. The rule of a Frederick and a Catherine, despotic as the principles of both have been, cannot be denied to be much more lenient, and better calculated to promote the public welfare, than that of their predecessors.

All this is very well as far as it goes. But since arbitrary rulers must ever have an interest nearer and dearer to them than the happiness of their subjects, viz. that of their power, they will never willingly acquiesce in promoting the public improvement with respect to those points on which this power is founded. And as great part of the worst abuses in corrupt governments are intimately connected with the maintenance of the sovereign authority, it is vain to expect that they will ever be reformed till the people themselves come to understand and pursue their own interests. But here is the great difficulty. How is it possible that the mass of a nation should ever, in the hands of their old masters, become enlightened enough to comprehend their evils, and the remedies of them—should be able peaceably to deliberate about them, and take proper steps for their relief—should avoid the snares of crafty demagogues, and pursue steadily the right objects by the wisest means—and, finally, amidst the unjust

opposition they would be sure to meet with, should preserve their minds from that irritation which will in the end break out in acts of the most dreadful violence? Alas! have we not too well learned what a nation will do that rises to revenge those injuries which either wisdom cannot, or selfishness will not, redress in a proper time and manner? But they should first have been enlightened, say the friends of knowledge and liberty. How? when their meetings for instruction are prevented by the bayonet; when the press is shackled by penal restrictions; and when hired teachers tell the people that they have nothing to do with the laws but to obey them? The melioration of mankind by means of political revolutions, is, indeed, a noble subject of speculation; and I am far from asserting, that the hopes of patriots on this head are futile and visionary; but, for my own part, I have only the *wish* left—the *confidence* is gone.

But are there not modes in which increased knowledge may more quietly and gradually meliorate the condition of mankind? May we not expect much from improved systems of morality? —for, morals being in fact nothing else than such a rule of life as will promote the greatest degree of happiness; and the art of living happily being as much an experimental art as any other,

will it not be making a continual progress in human societies, who can have no interest so dear to them as carrying it to perfection? This, undoubtedly, seems a plausible deduction; but, I fear, an impartial survey of history will not permit us to be very sanguine in our expectations. Has it, in reality, appeared that either individuals or bodies of men, in proportion as they have advanced in those branches of knowledge which adorn and elevate the species, have been more just, more temperate, more beneficent?

What are the great moral evils under which mankind labor? Are they not, with respect to ourselves, the indulgence of our appetites and passions, and false estimates of happiness, proceeding from vicious associations—with respect to others, the preference we give to our own interests above that of the community?—And are not these propensities interwoven into our very nature, and only to be controuled by a long course of discipline? Is the man of *knowledge*, to whom so many new sources of enjoyment are opened, less likely to grasp with eagerness at the means of attaining those enjoyments, than the illiterate and easily satisfied peasant? Can luxury ever be separated from refinement, avarice from commerce, or rapacity from power? It is granted, that a strong and enlightened system of

government may check many of the *public* mischiefs which would flow from these sources; but how, without intolerable restraints upon freedom of action, shall it prevent the *private* ones? Look at our manufacturing towns, and try to separate, even in idea, the vices and miseries that overrun them, from the circumstance of a vast population composed of artificers, who, if their wages are low, must employ their whole time in providing the necessaries of life; if high, will lie under temptations to excess, which they have no principles that can enable them to resist. The almost insuperable difficulties experienced in every plan for amending the state of the yearly increasing poor in great towns, sufficiently evinces the intimate connection between private calamity, and what has always appeared to constitute public prosperity.*

The new order of things which seemed opening upon Europe, afforded no prospect more flattering to the lovers of mankind, than that of a probable extinction of the wars which from the earliest records have never ceased to ravage the world. It was very plausibly argued, that since nothing was more demonstrable than the preponderance of evil which a war brought even upon the successful party, as soon as nations should become capable of pursuing as well as discovering

their true interests, the sword would no longer be resorted to for the decision of their differences. But the first consequence of the French Revolution has been a very extensive and most bloody war, entered into with as much eagerness and animosity by the several parties as any former one; and, in the mean time, three potentates have joined unmolested in a scheme of sharing between them one of the principal portions of Europe, and abolishing a rising liberty which had every plea of justice in its favor. Nor does it appear, that a temporary peace can be restored without leaving abundant seeds of future discord; or that even the greatest sufferers by the war, are likely to be cured of the fatal propensity to rush again into quarrels on the slightest occasions of ambition or contention. War is in so many ways the author of misery, and the obstacle of melioration, that unless somewhat decisive shall be effected for abolishing it from the ordinary course of human affairs, it may be affirmed, that *nothing* comparatively is done towards a better state of things. The propensity to national hostility has already withstood all the efforts of a religion apparently promulgated for the express purpose of restoring peace on earth. It did not, even when its influence was strongest, bestow the shortest breathing-time on mankind; and its ministers

have long been, and are at the present day, some of the most active promoters of the horrid spirit of mutual enmity. The banner is consecrated at the altar before it is dipped in blood; and prayers are solemnly offered up in every church in Christendom for success in every act of public violence that the sovereign of each country shall please to engage in.

The spirit of commerce too, which so much distinguishes the present age, instead of binding the nations in a golden chain of mutual peace and friendship, seems only to have given additional motives for war. Each state aims at a monopoly, only to be established by an armed force; and the improvements of navigation have contracted the dimensions of the world so as not to allow space enough for the schemes of a merchant's counting-house. Further, the present system of trade can only be maintained by the slavery or subjugation of great numbers of mankind; and while the East and West Indies compose links in the chain of European commerce, cruelty and injustice must be the means by which it is made to hold together.

From these considerations, I fear, we have very insufficient grounds to suppose, that the desired melioration of the world upon *public* principles is as yet commenced. All that a comparison of this

century with the last will allow us with certainty to infer, is greater lenity and regularity in the administration of government in some countries; more encouragement to the exertions of industry; and a desire in governors to participate in the improvements made by art and science, which has the good effect of inciting them to encourage the means of advancing useful knowledge, though often from narrow and selfish motives. If, in opposition to these advantages, be set the prodigious increase of standing armies; the vast accumulation of national debts and burthens; and the extinction of a spirit of independence in numbers of the middle and superior ranks of society, while the lowest are doomed to ceaseless toil in order to gain a mere subsistence, I question if the most sanguine friend of mankind can strike a fair balance which will give him much satisfaction.

But, not to dwell entirely upon the dark side of the prospect, I shall state a few circumstances of *private* improvement, on which I think we may safely place some reliance.

It is impossible to doubt that, in all the more civilized parts of the world, superstition and bigotry, those bitter foes of human happiness, have lost much of their power; and that this has been owing to that progress of good sense and knowledge which may be expected to go on still further

diminishing their influence. It is true, the connection between old systems of belief and old claims of authority, may for a while maintain the struggle of falshood and violence, against truth and equity ; but I would fain hope that imposture and persecution have received their death wound in Europe, and will never again be able to produce the follies and miseries under which men so many ages groaned. Religious systems are still, indeed, full of error, and are little, if at all, mended in their principles ; but the spirit of the times has been too potent for them, and doubt or indifference has effected what mere argument could not have done. Emancipation from the servile dread of supernatural evils, and from the burthensome and degrading practices by which they were to be averted, is a gain in point of happiness which cannot be too highly prized. It enters deep into the comfort of private life, and makes all the difference between a freeman and a slave. And that increased lenity in governments and liberality in individuals, which renders the profession of a different religious faith from the established one, no longer dangerous or degrading, is a most important advantage to all dissidents.

The great diffusion of knowledge, though perhaps of a superficial kind, among ranks of people

who formerly possessed scarcely the smallest portion of it, has certainly added much to the pleasures and variety of life; and if it has tended to soften and humanize the manners, and introduced a greater love for sedentary amusements, and the pursuits of cultivated leisure, I own I am one of those who think this a good exchange against the rough vigor and rude simplicity of former ages. Nor can it escape any observer, that even the amusive writings of the present day are almost invariably friendly to decency, humanity, generosity, and all the finer and nobler feelings of the heart. And as a consequence of the propagation of such sentiments, the virtues of charity, beneficence, and affability, were certainly never more conspicuous. From these considerations I am not willing to accept the concession of a very zealous believer in the progression of the human race, the late Condorcet, who asserts "that though much has been done for the glory of mankind, scarcely any thing has yet been done for its happiness." It is true, that the continuance of destructive wars, and of the immense inequality of conditions, perpetuates a vast mass of evils in society; yet these evils, which at no period did not exist, are undoubtedly softened by modern manners; and private life has in various respects been made happier to all ranks of people.

But I own that the very circumstance of some improvement in these points, leads me to despair of those radical and effectual meliorations which many expect from vigorous schemes of reform, conducted upon principles of general interest and public virtue. Our situation has too many advantages to be readily hazarded; and the exertions requisite to maintain those advantages too much occupy our minds to allow of the application of much time and attention to matters remotely concerning ourselves. Our tempers, too, with the sternness, have lost the force, of the heroic ages; nor do I conceive that any considerable number of us would be capable of going through the rough work of a reformation when brought from theory to practice. If the instance of a neighbouring nation be brought to refute the notion of a necessary connection between advancement in civilization and effeminacy of character; it may be urged, on the other hand, that the shocking calamities which have attended its revolutionary exertions will with certainty for a long time render its history more a warning than an example to other nations. Melioration, according to its warmest advocates, cannot be effected without overthrowing all usurpations in government, all impositions in religion, rooting up all prejudices, levelling all artificial distinctions, and equal-

izing mankind so far as can be done consistently with the fundamental principles of social union. But where are the engines by which these mighty operations are to be brought about? The pulpit, the bar, the sword, are already engaged in support of existing institutions; and the press, on which the chief reliance of reformers is placed, is at least half bought by the same powerful bidders. Not a single axiom on which the rights of man are founded, has been able to fix itself beyond the reach of assault. All is disputed; and where argument fails, authority is called in to give succour; while wit and eloquence fight indiscriminately on either side.

I shall conclude with one more reflection which forcibly presses upon me. All the proofs that have been adduced of the amended state of mankind, and all that I have admitted as real or probable, relate only to Europe and her immediate connections, and not even to the whole of that. But what a small portion of the human race does this comprehend! The last accounts of China state the population of that empire alone at upwards of three hundred millions, of which sum all Europe can only show a trifling fraction. Who can with the least probability suggest improvement in that ancient, vain and prejudiced people, who only know enough of us and our in-

stitutions to suspect and despise us? Who pretends to see less ferocity in the African, less pride in the Turk, less rapine in the Arab, less perfidy in the Indian, less cruelty in the Persian? Alas! while we are overwhelmed at home with business enough to occupy reformation for centuries, all these vast regions have not as yet heard the word sound in their ears, and would probably shudder at the proposal of any innovation as the direst of crimes! The imagination can scarcely conceive that change which should render our books, our knowledge, our opinions, familiar to these people. Nothing but entire conquest would seem anywise adequate to this effect; and what a Pandora's box does that word *conquest* comprise! Better, surely, that the world should remain in its present mixed and imperfect state, than that an uniformity of good should be aimed at by means which are themselves the greatest of evils!

ON TOLERATION IN RUSSIA.

THERE has lately been published by a German divine an account of the state of religious toleration in Russia, which appears to me not only to contain some curious matter of fact, but to afford important matter for reflection also. Both these will form the topics of the following paper.

For three centuries past it has been the practice of the Russian sovereigns to indulge strangers in the free enjoyment of their religious worship; and under the name of strangers appear to have been included those numerous tribes or nations which have been adopted into the Russian empire by submission or conquest. This policy has probably been derived from the Turks and other eastern nations; and it has, in later reigns, been enforced by the necessity of inviting strangers in order to carry into effect the great plans of civilization and improvement, which have been trans-

mitted from one sovereign to another. The *Account* in question was drawn up in the time of the late empress Catharine, whose *managing* spirit reduced this, like every other public concern, into a system. The following are its essential points. All religions are tolerated in Russia. Christian of every denomination, Jew, Mahometan, Pagan, may each worship his God, or Gods, in the way his father has done before him. Neither is there any thing like a religious test for admission to public offices. The first persons in the civil and military departments are Greek, Roman-catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, &c. as it may happen. The sovereign's choice is a sufficient qualification; nothing exists to controul it. Yet there is a national church, strongly marked by its privileges, and perfectly secured against that dread of all churches, innovation. In the first place, though the different sectaries may change at pleasure from one church to another, yet the true native Russian must inviolably adhere to the religion in which he is born, the Greek: any change in him is apostasy; and foreign ecclesiastics are forbidden to receive a Russian into their communities. Nay, if a foreigner once conforms to the established religion, he is fixed in it for ever. If a foreigner's children, in defect of a minister of his own persuasion, chance to receive baptism from a

Greek priest, they must likewise ever remain members of the national church. Moreover, in marriages between a Russian and a foreigner, the offspring, without a very particular dispensation from court, must be brought up in the Greek faith. The marriage ceremony, even of strangers, must always be performed according to the Russian ritual; but this, indeed, imposes no subsequent obligation on the parties, or their children.

Such is the plan philosophical despotism has formed for the management of religion in a great empire; and I doubt not there are many who will admire it as an extraordinary effort both of liberality and of good policy. It may seem to unite in the happiest manner the support of a national church with a regard to the rights of conscience in those who have been educated in a different communion; and may be thought equally to guard against the evils of innovation, and those of a forced uniformity. For myself, however, I cannot but consider it as a remarkable instance of the impudence of power—of the propensity of mortals elevated by station above their fellow-creatures, to assume the prerogative of dictating to them in their most important concerns. The spirit of the preceding regulations is this—"All religions are equal—equally true, or equally false. It is useful to the sovereign to have a prevailing one under

his special influence and protection; yet it is not worth while to quarrel with strangers, or deprive the state of their services, for the sake of uniformity. Subjects, however, are to be taught, that the choice of religion does not belong to them, but to their master. They are to follow authority in that, as in any other matter of civil regulation; and it would be punishable presumption in them to decide for themselves, as if *they* had any concern in the conclusion. A person *may be* of any religion he is commanded to be—he may bring his soul to submit as well as his body; and no duty can be supposed to supersede that of absolute submission to the sovereign." This manner of considering the subject is, in fact, a greater affront to the human understanding, than the power assumed by a Spanish Inquisition. The latter founds all its authority upon the supposition that what it maintains is exclusively the *truth*, and truth of the highest importance to mankind; and it affects to make *conviction* the basis of that uniformity of belief and practice which it compels. It equally, indeed, with the other denies the right of private judgement; but it is on the plea that the matter has already been judged by the only competent tribunal; and it will not permit reasons of state or local circumstances to sway the decision of points not amenable to civil jurisdic-

tion. The Russian scheme is evidently formed upon political considerations ; but it is accommodated only to a nation, the great body of which are stupid barbarians. It proves that despots, with all the free thinking they may profess, are only half philosophers. They would gladly enjoy all the benefit which can arise from the mental energies of their slaves, without taking off their shackles when acting for themselves. But to reduce the mind to such a state of discipline is beyond their power. It will not be limited in its exertions. It will not expand itself freely upon topics of comparatively small consequence, and pass over those of the greatest. While the native Russians are to be mere hewers of wood, and drawers of water, they may perhaps be made to continue to worship pictures bought at their *god shops*, and fast and pray just as their priests bid them. But if the noble plan is really pursued of reclaiming a great people from barbarism, and placing them on a level with the most enlightened nations of Europe, they must be allowed at least as much liberty as the strangers who come to teach them, and not have their religion chosen for them like a footman's livery, or a soldier's regimentals. How mean and barbarous is this policy, as well as every other scheme for restraining free inquiry, compared with the simple trans-

atlantic plan of leaving religion, like other matters of individual concern, to the care of individuals themselves, secure that it can never injure the peace of a well regulated state, as long as the state abstains from interposing in its differences !

MILITARY PIETY.

"WAR[a] (says an eminent writer) is so bad a thing, that nothing but a mixture of religion can make it worse." This, however, by no means appears to be the general opinion and the union of the military and religious character is one of the most popular ideas of the time. Indeed it could scarcely be otherwise, when we are engaged in a war, one great object of which is the support of religion of every species against atheism and impiety; and when we have the happiness to be connected with allies so distinguished for religious zeal. It is peculiarly edifying to be informed of the exemplary regularity observed by that humane and civilized body, the Russian soldiery, in the performance of their devotions. This, indeed, is not to be wondered at, since the very robbers of that nation are equally punctilious in this

[a] Written during the French revolution-war.

respect. We are told by a writer of credit, that a famous Russian leader of banditti, whose thirst for human blood was such, that he was accustomed to tie his captives to a tree, and open their breasts while alive, in order that he might drink the vital fluid fresh and warm; on being asked by his confessor, as he was led to execution, whether he had duly observed the fasts and festivals of the church? was affronted with the question, and in his turn asked the priest whether he did not take him for a christian? Under the late conscientious empress Catherine, the Russian court-manifestoes were remarkable beyond any in Europe for solemn appeals to the Deity; and it is to be presumed that her successor has not degenerated in this point. The accounts that have been published of the devotional spirit of the celebrated conqueror of Ismael and Praga, cannot fail of giving high delight to those who regard him as the destined restorer of monarchy and catholicism in France. As there is always something interesting in the parallels between great men in different periods, I shall beg leave to place beside these the sketch given by Brantome of an illustrious commander of his time, also a distinguished chief in a catholic league, the constable of France, Anne de Montmorenci.

"Every morning (says the historian) whether

he was at home or in the army, on a march or in camp, he never neglected to recite and hear his *paternosters.* But it was a saying among the soldiers, "Take care of the *paternosters* of Monsieur the Constable;" for whilst he was muttering them over, he would throw in, by way of parenthesis, as the occasions of discipline or war demanded, "Hang me that fellow on the next tree—pass me that other through the pikes—bring me hither that man and shoot him before my face—cut me in pieces all those rascals who are so audacious as to defend that steeple against the king—burn me that village—set fire to all the country for a quarter of a league round:" and all this he would do without the least interruption to his devotions, which he would have thought it a sin to defer to another hour, *so tender was his conscience!*"

This I think an admirable picture of a soldier's devotion; and though it is not quite suited to an English camp or quarter-deck, it would, I suppose, appear natural enough in a Russian field marshal, or a bashaw of three-tails; whom we are now so happy as to be entitled in some measure to call *our own.*

INQUIRY INTO THE NATURE OF FAMILY PRIDE.

MORALISTS and Divines agree in the condemnation of *pride*, from whatever source it is derived; but some kinds of it have ever been treated with lighter censure than others; and some, in the common estimate, have even been elevated into laudable principles of action, and have been supposed to denote an exalted soul. The pride of virtue among the ancient philosophers, especially of the Stoic sect, though it was apt to inspire an arrogant and unamiable demeanour, certainly in many cases raised the mind above every thing mean and vulgar, and proved an incitement to worthy conduct. Similar effects have usually been attributed to the *pride of family*; and no common place is more frequent in works of fiction, and even in popular morality, than the influence of high descent in dignifying the sentiments, and

prompting to noble deeds. It is obvious, that the reality of such effects must depend upon the character and foundation of this species of pride; for the mere affection of pride, consisting in a high estimate of one's-self, is more likely to debase than to ennoble, to repress than to rouse, since it supposes the object already attained for the sake of which great exertions are made. Let us therefore inquire into the actual source of family pride, as prevailing among ourselves. It is possible, that its character may admit of different shades and variations from local circumstances; yet I should imagine, that it must every where derive its essence from the general principles of human nature.

There are two grounds upon which a sentiment of this kind may be made to appear not unreasonable; one, the supposition that superior qualities are actually transmitted in certain families by procreation; the other, that descendants possess a sort of inheritance in the public merits of their ancestors.

With respect to the first, as it is an undoubted fact, that not only the bodily but the mental constitution of parents is, in some degree, renovated in their children; it was no improbable opinion that those qualities which in a rude state of society had raised the possessors above their fellows,

should, for a time at least, shine conspicuous in their lineal progeny. A race of Heraclidæ might long be distinguished by a portion of the strength and fortitude of their great progenitor. Horace, by the analogy of the brute creation, supports his position of

> "*Fortes creantur fortibus et bonis:*"
> "The brave and good produce the good and brave."

It was unfortunate, that the race of human beings by whom he exemplified his doctrine, was the family of the *Neros*; but he was a poet and not a prophet, and could not foresee how soon a name which great qualities had raised to honor, might be rendered eternally infamous by the vices of a degenerate offspring. In more modern times it has been asserted, that valor, honor, and good sense, have been hereditary in certain families; and epitaphs have told of noble breeds of which "all the males were brave, and all the females virtuous." But in a long line, so many accidents may happen to interrupt the stream of propagated excellencies, that I presume the credit of such pretensions is quite at an end. Nor do I suppose, that the inheritors of high blood would themselves be forward to put in claims which might excite too large expectations in the public. Who would venture to profess himself an heir to the politcal

wisdom of a Cecil, or the military talents of a Churchill? The truth is, that natural perfections of mind and body are indifferently the lot of all conditions of life; and the chance is just the same, as far as birth is concerned, that a Bacon or a Newton should honor the palace or the cottage. Every thing further is the result of education; and whether that of the great be best adapted to carry the human species to its highest degree of perfection, may be left to the great themselves to determine. Scarcely any man, therefore, is probably proud of his descent on the supposition, that he has derived from it moral or intellectual endowments superior to those of mankind in general. And with respect to the body, they who talk, almost as if they understood it literally, of the purity of the blood which flows in their veins, must be perpetually recalled from the pleasing delusion, by the homeliness, deformities, and hereditary diseases, which render so many noble races extremely bad specimens of the human form divine.

The supposed participation in the merits of ancestors is next to be considered as a ground of family pride.

The public gratitude, which, in its displays, has frequently comprehended with the person of a public benefactor those of his children, and even of his remote descendants, has given a sanction to

this notion of *transmitted merit*, and proved it to have a foundation in human nature. Yet reason and reflection must teach, that every tribute paid by society on this account, has its just bounds; that present demerit may cancel all the claims of past desert; and that even length of time may obliterate the debt. We can scarcely conceive of services so great, that they may not be repaid in honor and emolument, if not to the person himself, at least to his immediate representatives; and it is evident, that, were public rewards to be perpetuated to all posterity, future generations would find the stock anticipated, by which they should remunerate benefits of their own growth. In order to establish a just title to the honors associated with a noble name, along with the name there should be a transmission of a portion of the character and principles which first made it the object of respect. If a race of Publicolas think it a duty affixed to their appellation, to continue from age to age the guardians of the people's rights, they will continue entitled to their attachment and veneration; but if they dwindle down to the satellites of a court, how shall they dare to arrogate respect on account of their relation to ancestors whose principles they have renounced, and whose actions, by their own conduct, they disavow? No consideration, indeed, ought to be more

awful, or even oppressive to the mind, than that of being the representative of men whose remembrance will ever live in the breasts of their admiring countrymen: for what is its effect, but that of providing a perpetual fund for humiliating comparisons? This is the topic particularly dwelt upon, with a mixture of humor and indignation, by the manly Juvenal, in his energetic satire upon nobility.

But the claim to public reverence on account of the signal *merits* of ancestors, be it well or ill founded, cannot possibly come within the view of a great majority of those who boast of *family*. From the august genealogies of kings and emperors, down to the pedigrees of country squires, how few are there which can exhibit characters of distinguished virtue or abilities, or to whom their country can justly be reckoned indebted! If names now and then occur, which the historian has deigned to record among the actors in memorable events, it is to be considered, that high stations are necessarily the lot of property and influence; and that transactions of great moment, which are conducted by the united exertions of many, are often ascribed to an individual, who had no other share in them, than that of being the nominal head. Battles are gained, and negotiations brought to effect, under the auspices of

persons of rank, in whose abilities perhaps not the least confidence is placed even by those who employ them. They merely serve for the decoration; while all the real business is done by men not highly born enough to dispense with professional knowledge. Thus the brave and skilful Chevert obtained a victory and a marshal's staff for the prince de Soubise; concerning which it was wittily said in an epigram, "Who should have the staff, but he who cannot walk alone?" But without entering into a rigorous scrutiny, but making a liberal allowance of every *imputed* public service, it may be asked, Will our men of family consent to take precedence, according to the aggregate of meritorious deeds recorded of the whole race? It will not, I believe, come under the charge of *scandalum magnatum* to affirm, that the nobility and gentry, neither of this, nor of any other country, would acquiesce in such a proposal. In fact, a person must be little acquainted with the sentiments that really prevail in the world, to suppose that the pride of ancestry has, in general, any connection whatever with merit, either genuine or imputed. Its grounds are, simply, relative superiority of condition, together with the length of time in which that superiority has been enjoyed. It is, therefore, no other than *a modification of the pride of wealth*; and while more absurd in its ap-

plication than this sentiment, it is not at all more elevated or dignified in its nature.

The English nobleman who traces his lineage to one "who came in with the Conqueror," is content to refer his origin to a soldier of fortune, a subaltern leader of banditti, who, for his assistance in turning out the lawful possessors, was rewarded with a share of their property. He was brave, as were all of his Norman countrymen. The greedy appetite for spoil would lead him, as it would the meanest of his band, to confront any dangers; but he was ignorant, unlettered, unprincipled, and brutal. By the number of vassals he brought into the field, was estimated the proportion of conquered land that fell to his share; and this proportion constituted the sole difference between the greater and the inferior families built upon this foundation. Where the spoil was half or the whole of a county, it gave rise to an earldom or barony, which, descending through various fortunes to the present time, has conferred the highest hereditary honors this kingdom affords. Now, the original mode in which this property was acquired, certainly conveys no valuable lesson to a descendant; and amidst the train through which it has successively passed, may probably be found all that variety of character and conduct which the human condition, joined to power and wealth, is

likely to produce. Some of them were, of course, generals, ministers, heads of factions, now on the royal, now on the popular side, as it suited their interests; now rewarded with new honors and possessions as supporters of the crown, now attainted and brought to the scaffold as traitors. "Treason, sacrilege, and proscription (says Gibbon), are often the best titles of ancient nobility." Is it, then, from a moral or intellectual estimate of such men as these, that the idea of a noble and illustrious race is derived by the judges of family consequence—the adepts in heraldry and genealogy? No.—It is quite sufficient for them to trace Bohuns and Mowbrays from century to century, as the possessors of certain hereditary honors, and the owners of certain manors; and all individuals are sunk in the abstract notion of a *great house*. The Spaniards, though prouder of nobility than any nation in Europe, gave to their original great landholders only the appropriate title of *Ricos Hombres*—rich men.

The untitled country gentleman cannot be supposed to entertain more elevated ideas of ancestry, than the ennobled patrician. The connection of his *name* with a *certain parcel of land* at a remote period, is all that he thinks it incumbent upon him to establish in proof of his gentility; and the measure of his relative consequence is the number of

acres in this land, combined with the length of time during which his family have been the possessors of it. These two considerations, it is true, somewhat interfere ; so that it may become a matter of doubt, whether an ancient race of small property be not more honorable than a more modern one with ampler possessions : and this is one of the modifications by which the pride of family somewhat differs from the simple pride of wealth. But the foundation of both being the same, namely, distinction from the mass of people by a superiority in riches, it does not appear how the mere circumstance of the length of time in which this has been enjoyed, can constitute any essential difference in effect. In this country, where certainly more sobriety and consistency in estimating the advantages of life prevail than in most others, it is very seldom that the proudest gentleman of ancient descent will refuse to ally himself to superior wealth and influence, how recent soever be their date. What is usually meant when it is said, Such an one is a person of *good family*? Is any other idea excited, than that of opulence and living at ease? Do not we immediately paint to ourselves a good landed estate, a rich church preferment, or a thriving profession? And if any moral notions associate themselves with the word *good*, are they not merely such as naturally belong

to a condition which rises above the ordinary temptations to meanness and dishonesty, and renders it easy to perform acts of generosity and liberality? In this sense, is the gentleman of ancient name superior to the wealthy trader of yesterday?

Whatever be the forms under which family pride appears, they are for the most part only varieties of the self-consequence derived from property. Thus, when a person boasts that his ancestors have never sullied themselves with low or mercenary employments, what is it but boasting that they have been able to live upon their hereditary possessions, without any exertions of personal industry? The rich trader may promise the same hereafter for himself and his descendants, as long as the wealth he has accumulatd shall last. And if the gentleman falls into poverty, what becomes of his boast? He will scorn, perhaps, to cringe behind a counter; but he will not scruple to bow at a minister's levee. He will think it beneath him to practise for gain any useful talents he may possess; but he will deem it honorable to let himself out to hire, for the purpose of butchering those who never offended him, on the mere considerations of pay and plunder. He will be a venal senator, a prostitute lawyer, or an unbelieving priest, without derogating from gentility. But is not the man who goes to mar-

ket with his conscience, as much a trader as if he set up a stall at a fair; with this difference only, that he deals in a viler commodity than ever came out of a manufacturer's hands?

Does the *gentleman* value himself upon his education and manners? These too, if of a superior kind, have only been rendered so by superiority in the means of obtaining improvement, or of appearing in society with respect and independence. None are at present better educated, than the children of many who have become opulent by commerce; as, on the other hand, instances are sufficiently common of mean and narrow educations given to the inferior branches of great families. A common literary education is within the reach of persons much beneath the rank of gentility; and as its success chiefly depends upon the motives to improve it to the best advantage, it is less to be expected from the heirs of opulence, than from those who are sensible that their livelihood must depend upon their own exertions. With respect to the extraordinary advantages of particular tuition, of travel, and the like, these are all open to the persons who can pay for them, and to no others. The *manners* which are supposed to denote a familiarity with good company, have two sources; the sense of self-consequence, and the habits of artificial politeness. The first will,

doubtless, attend persons of real rank and importance; but it is derived rather from station and fortune, than from what is properly called family. It is often surprisingly soon caught by men of very low origin, who arrive at posts of dignity, or high commercial prosperity; while it may be totally extinct in the needy descendant of ten noble generations. The second is an accomplishment which, like all others, must be *studied* by those who wish to excel in it. High birth is, doubtless, an advantage towards its acquisition; but the opportunities it affords are often neglected. That *arbiter elegantiarum*, Lord Chesterfield, has scarcely allowed any of the first men of his time, in point of rank and office, to have had the manners and conversation of gentlemen. (See his Characters.) Indeed, the very circumstance of elevated situation may operate unfavorably upon the manners, from the carelessness it is likely to inspire with respect to pleasing in society, the desire of which is the only true source of politeness. The lowest appendages of quality are more likely to acquire that deportment which conciliates regard and goodwill, than their lords and patrons.

If a just interpretation of the nature and origin of family-pride have been given in the preceding remarks, it will not be easy to show, why it should tend to elevate the mind, or stimulate to great and

honorable exertions. We may, indeed, image to ourselves a parent exhorting his child in the warmest strains of affectionate eloquence, to prove himself the worthy descendant of a long race of heroes or patriots. But the misfortune is, when we quit fancy for reality, that these pure races are nowhere to be found; and it is not without great selection, that a noble youth can safely draw his examples from his genealogical table. How many names, and, perhaps, the most distinguished ones too, will occur in every line, which, instead of the love of public virtue, will inspire a lawless lust of power, or an admiration of unprincipled daring; instead of the heart-felt esteem of private worth and integrity, will kindle the ambition of dazzling by splendid profligacy! The lesson he is of all the most likely to learn is, the great importance of riches; he sees how much they conduced to the consequence of his progenitors, and why should he form a different estimate of his own? If, therefore, he inherits wealth, he is proud of that wealth. If he inherits only the title and memory of past opulence, he is mortified by the contrast between his name and his circumstances; and feels no necessity so urgent, as that of retrieving the honor, that is the fortune, of his family. To one whose prejudices preclude him from many of the most useful and honest ways of gaining a

fortune, such an impression must often be the cause of hurtful and dishonorable expedients. And, in fact, none have in all countries been so systematically hostile to the liberties and rights of their fellow-subjects, as the brood of indigent nobility, who seem to think themselves unjustly treated by the community, as long as their revenues are inadequate to the expectations of their birth.

To revert to the question proposed as the object of inquiry,—I conceive it to be the true nature of family pride, to institute an estimate of personal value, essentially founded upon superiority of wealth, and recurring to such a superiority for its support. It cannot, therefore, be relied upon as a solid principle for the elevation of the character. It may occasionally prompt to great and noble actions, but there is no security against its inspiring pernicious and disgraceful ones. It is inferior in worth, not only to genuine morality, but to a regard for the common good opinion of mankind, which implies a sense of community of sentiment and interest; whereas family-pride is a secluding and dissociating principle.

APOLOGY

FOR

THE DEMOLITION

OF

RUINS.

---

[a] I KNOW not where I can better apply than to your liberal publication, for the purpose of making my protest against what I conceive a very unjust censure passed upon my character. Allow me, therefore, without further preface, to state my case to your readers.

Three years ago, on the death of a distant relation, I came unexpectedly into possession of an estate situated in one of the most pleasing rural situations in this kingdom. Having always had a fondness for the country, which, till that time, professional engagements would not suffer me to indulge; I determined, without hesitation, to fix my future residence in the spot which fortune had bestowed upon me. I therefore hastened down, with the purpose of making such alterations and

[a] This fancy-piece was originally sent as a communication to a periodical work.

improvements as fancy or convenience might suggest, in a place which had been more indebted to nature than to the attention of its late possessors. In going the round of my domains, I observed in a sweet retired vale, within the flexure of a clear brook, a mass of unsightly ruins, overgrown with weeds, offering to the eye nothing better than some half-demolished walls, surrounding heaps of shapeless rubbish. The soil about it was rich; and the spot was well defended "from cold septentrion blasts" by a rising hillock to the north, and a tall plantation to the east. Among my little tastes, one of the strongest is a delight in the cultivation of rare and beautiful plants; and as at the instant a plan of fortifications was suggested to uncle Toby, his bowling-green presented itself to his imagination, so, on the view of this sequestered place, I cried to myself, in a kind of rapture, "What a charming situation for a botanical garden!" "And then (I proceeded) we shall find stones enow among this rubbish for an inclosure; and on that largest heap, which overlooks the stream, I will build a little summer-house, and convert all the base of it into a piece of rock-work." To make my story short, so much did this scheme run in my head, that I did not rest till it was put in execution; and if, Mr. Editor, you are a lover of plants, I may venture to say you would be delighted to see the number of

beautiful vegetables which I have already established here, and would enjoy the verdant scenery round the windows of my little cabinet.

But now comes the unpleasant part of the history. Soon after the ruins were demolished, and the edifices erected upon them, a *Dr. Moulder*, a very learned man, and a distinguished fellow of the Antiquarian Society, who happened to be visiting in the neighbourhood, called one morning when I was abroad, and desired my gardener to show him about my grounds, particularly requesting to see the remains of the *convent*. "Convent! sir, (says the fellow,) we have no such thing that I ever heard of; but, perhaps, your worship means the old walls that my master pulled down when he made his new garden by the brook. "Pulled down!" cried the doctor; "what do you mean?—but show me to the place." The man took him to the vale, and was going to open the garden door, when a flat stone in the wall, on which were some traces of letters, caught the doctor's eye. He stopped short, lifted up his hands, and broke forth into exclamations which frightened the poor fellow, and of which he remembers only the words "barbarous! monstrous! sacrilege!" He then took out of his pocket a memorandum-book, and began, with much pains, and no little ill-humor, to transcribe the inscription, which unfortu-

nately gave him additional trouble by being fixed in the wall the wrong end upwards. He ended by exactly measuring the length and breadth of the stone with a pocket rule. "Well (says he, turning to the man,) I see you have done your work completely. I suppose you dug up the old building from the foundation?" "We did, sir, (replied he,) and a power of trouble we had with it. They say it was a famous place in the time of the Papishes. But if your worship wants to see any more gravestones, I can show you some." The doctor acquiescing in this proposal, he was led to the fragments of a few more monumental stones in different parts of the wall, the rude letters of which, where they were at all legible, he faithfully copied, and then; without deigning to pay the least attention to my *improvements*, he made the man an acknowledgment, and hastily walked off.

The circumstances of this visit, when related, only diverted me, till, a few months afterwards, an acquaintance calling upon me, "Do you know," says he, with a serious face, "what an attack has been made upon you in print?" I was startled; upon which he took out a periodical publication, renowned for its gravity in trifles, and showed me a letter concerning the lately existing remains of the Monastery of Cistercians in the parish of ———, which I presently discovered to have been

written by my testy visitant. In this letter, the owner of the place was treated in the harshest terms, as "a Vandal, a foe to reverend antiquity, a violator of the dead, and a person void of all taste and all regard for literature."—"The precious relics which time and the rough hand of reformation had spared, were utterly destroyed by my ruder hands; and, as far as in me lay, I had contributed to the overthrow of one of the most pleasing and useful of studies."

To these charges, Sir, I am loth to plead guilty; for though I have not ranked in that class of men whose sole business in life is the employment of literary leisure, yet neither by education nor habit am I a total stranger to the Muses; and I trust I have a heart not inaccessible to the pleasures of knowledge, nor hardened against the impressions of sentiment. I must, indeed, acknowledge that I have not learned to value a thing merely because it is old and useless: nor do my feelings plead with me in favor of relinquishing to the bones of ancient possessors the perpetual occupation of those seats which, when living, they wisely selected on account of their beauty or convenience. I see not why I should not enjoy my garden as well as the monks did theirs in the same spot; and I think it a much less crime to disturb the repose of their skeletons, than to banish Flora and

Pomona from a favorite residence. The *rights of the dead*, I confess, affect me little in comparison with those of the living; and I reckon it high time for the particles of bodies three or four centuries defunct, to return quietly to the bosom of the earth, and fulfil their destiny. As to the share of posthumous fame which may be preserved by the inscription of *Gualter de Thorpe Prior hujus Monast.* —I can accuse myself of a very small degree of injury in bringing it to a conclusion, when so many elaborate works under the title of *Monasticons*, *Repertories*, *Topographical Remains*, *County Histories*, &c. have taken such laudable pains to secure the immortality of these worthies by monuments *ære perenniora.*

The motives which inspire a reverence for the remains of antiquity, and plead against their demolition, are various; but I think the rational ones may be reduced to very few. Where they possess intrinsic beauty or grandeur, and afford specimens of the taste and ingenuity of former ages, they certainly deserve preservation; as likewise where they illustrate manners and modes of living, concerning which history is silent or obscure. Also, when they are associated with any remarkable event, though not essential to the transmission of such event, I should be as unwilling as any to break an association which may excite in sensible

hearts feelings of the most interesting kind. But why should ruinous piles without elegance or magnificence be left to cumber the ground, when they refer only to inconsiderable personages and ordinary modes of life, much less valuable in themselves than what have succeeded them, and at least as fully recorded as they deserve to be in the pages of history? Surely the stones of our wretched old mansions called castles, and of our gloomy monasteries, are not all so sacred, that they may not be applied to the better uses that modern taste and good sense would find for them!

INQUIRY

INTO

THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTER OF MAN.

THERE is nothing in which civilized antiquity appears more laudable, and indeed more enviable, than in the philosophical liberty it allowed of discussing speculative questions relative to some of the most important topics, without affixing either a public or a private stigma on an individual, on account of the conclusions he might deduce from his reasonings. Deriving the character of a man from the manner in which he fulfilled his duties in society, and taking for granted, that, if he acted well, he possessed the motives proper to influence him to that course of action, it regarded with great indifference the metaphysical or theological system he had chosen to adopt, and never entertained an idea of converting tenets of opinion into tests of qualification for the offices of a citizen. Our modern dogmatists, though very far from agreeing among themselves upon many fundamental points of doctrine, have yet associated their se-

veral modes of thinking so exclusively to the best principles of action, that they have refused the very name of goodness to virtues not deduced from their theories on the nature and relations of man. We have seen even so mere a matter of speculation, as the origin of evil, represented as the great hinge of morality; and a belief of that system which refers it to a supposed corruption of human nature, made the discrimination between genuine and spurious morals. That evil or imperfection exists throughout the whole sentient creation, is sufficiently obvious, but it would seem equally so, that our business can only be the correction of it; and that the means of doing this must be general to all human creatures, as far as they make use of reason and experience, whatever notions ancient fable or history may have given them concerning its origin. On this subject, as on many others, the rage for forming hypotheses seems to have created difficulties and perplexities which do not necessarily belong to it. If we content ourselves "with reasoning only from what we know," and consider the character and condition of man merely as facts in natural history, I conceive that our speculations concerning them need not be either intricate or unsatisfactory; and that we shall be able to free our minds from a mass of

error and prejudice tending to bewilder our ideas and mislead our conduct.

Man is the terminating link of the animal creation. It is equally evident that he participates the nature of this class of beings, and that he is at the summit of the scale. His points of conformity with the animals beneath him are striking and numerous. Like them, he passes through the stages of growth, maturity, and decline: like them, he perishes as an individual, but perpetuates himself as a species: like them, he has his pains and pleasures, diseases and remedies, wants and the means of supplying them. The first law of nature in both, is that of seeking happiness. In both, this happiness is partly personal, partly social. In both, occasions arise in which the personal and social coincide, and others in which they interfere. Now comes the principal moral difference. In brute animals, wherever the *storge*, or parental and conjugal affection, does not take place, the individual uniformly (a few dubious cases, perhaps, excepted) prefers his own gratification to that of another, or of any number of others: in man, the strength of sympathy, the pleasures of sentiment, the habits of society, and the reciprocal ties and dependencies of various kinds, have so involved the interests of numerous

individuals, that happiness cannot be pursued to any extent but as a matter of alliance and conjunction. Hence cases perpetually occur in which a man is induced to resign his immediate and single gratifications for the sake of that common good in which he is a sharer. This is a *law of his nature;* and, considering it as such, it is not of the smallest consequence whether a theorist finally refers it to a benevolent or a selfish principle. Further, he is enabled, by that idea of the connection of cause and effect, and that memory of past and anticipation of future events, which he possesses, if not solely, at least in a degree greatly superior to other animals, to resist the impulse of present appetite and passion, when his own greater good, or that of persons dear to him, requires it. Here then is a large provision made in his nature for the attainment of all the personal and social virtues. He will be prudent and temperate in the use of sensual enjoyments, both that he may not exhaust the source, and that the consequences of excess may not overbalance the pleasures. He will be kind and benevolent, compassionate and charitable, because he is so constituted as to sympathize in the happiness and misery of those around him; because he is a social, and not a solitary being. He will even interest himself in the concerns of large communities, and forego his

ease, and hazard his safety, to promote their advantage; because he is capable of personifying the ideas of country and mankind, and identifying himself with the human race; because he is sensible of the exalted pleasure of being admired and beloved when living, and can associate these feelings to his memory after death. If to this fund for useful and generous action be added the capacity of receiving pure and inexhaustible delight from the exertion of intellect, what an idea must be formed of the nature and condition of man, and how fitted must he seem to occupy the elevated rank assigned him in this visible system of things!

But it is also an invariable law of nature, that upon every advantage should be entailed, as it were, an appropriate inconvenience—upon every good should be quartered its evil. As in the tropical climates the same sun that nourishes a luxuriance of the richest vegetation, and provides abundance for all the wants of man, fills the air and earth with noxious insects, and exhales pestilence from the stagnant waters; so the noble powers bestowed upon the human race, and the multiplicity of strong motives perpetually rousing these powers to action, render its individuals more liable to err in the pursuit of their own happiness, and more capable of inflicting mischiefs upon each

other. The keen relish for varied gratification stimulates the intemperance of man, and administers food for insatiable cupidity. His love of power, of honor, of fame, involves him in endless rivalries and interferences. Even those attachments which take him in some measure out of self, and engage him in the interests of kindred, party, and country, enlarge the sphere of his contention, and precipitate him against whole masses of fellow-men, with whom, in a private capacity, he could not come into contact. Political institutions, and forms of government, which in one view are admirable contrivances for restraining the hurtful passions of mankind, in another, by the creation of a multiplicity of new relations and remote interests, are causes of unthought-of and interminable quarrels. Without experience, how could it be conceived that a hundred thousand human beings could, by any force, be set in array against another hundred thousand, with the mutual purpose of destruction, when the subject of the dispute perhaps concerned not a single person on either side, and even their passions took so little part in their hostility, that the signing of a piece of paper might immediately convert them all into friends and allies? If one swarm of bees engages in battle with another, it is for the possession of the hive and honey; and thus the war-

like tribes of men which issued from the great northern hive, were wont to contend for the occupation of more fertile lands in a better climate than their own. But the fruits of victory now belong only to the few, who, sitting quiet at home, direct this chess-play for their amusement or emolument. To such civilized gamesters, however, less than the extermination of an adversary will suffice; and a few bold moves may decide the contest with little comparative loss.

A circumstance which seems most remarkably to violate the analogy between the human and brutal nature, is the amazing difference of perfection attained by different individuals in the former, while those of the latter, in their several species, appear to be nearly upon the same level. Hence it has been inferred, that a very small part of mankind are what their creator intended they should be; and consequently, that a great future melioration in the mass is to be expected. But does not the nature of a being, capable, indeed, of high intellectual attainments, yet at the same time subjected to numerous corporeal wants and necessities, which are not to be supplied without care and toil, render such a difference unavoidable; and is it not manifestly impossible that the highly cultivated part should ever be more than a small minority? The leisure that they enjoy, and

all the advantage of books, instruments, and other things necessary to the pursuit of literature, are at the expense of the majority, whose bodily labors are by so much the more augmented, as a higher degree of cultivation augments the demands of those who can compel their services. Of this consequence some philosophers have been so sensible, that they have condemned not only the refinements of sensual pleasure, but even those mental luxuries which require a large apparatus; and they have looked for the perfection of human nature in that state of simplicity and equality which attends the rude beginnings of society. Though I by no means agree with them in their estimate of the real happiness of man, and think it a timid and narrow policy to acquiesce in imperfection through fear of the effects of a full exertion of the powers bestowed upon us; yet the general fact, that one part of mankind must be depressed proportionally to the exaltation of the other, I regard as indisputable. It is, indeed, a perfectly laughable ignorance in the speculatist who, sitting in his study, with all his conveniences about him, fancies that all the world might devote as much time to mental exercise as he does. Were he to trace the history of his fire and candle, his paper, pen, and ink, he would perhaps

be shocked to find how many pairs of hands are employed to favor the work of his head.

We may observe in nature numerous instances in which a provision seems to be made for proceeding much further in the attainment of certain purposes than is actually done. The amazing powers of generation bestowed upon fishes, insects, and the whole vegetable race, are, in great measure, apparently employed to pure loss,—to the production of an abortive progeny, or of one which it is impossible to bring to maturity. But for this seeming waste of effort we can satisfactorily account, from the necessity of securing a point so essential to the economy of nature, as the constant renovation of what is subjected to constant destruction. Thus, too, in the self-preservation of the individual, we often see an exertion of faculties, either of acting or enduring, vastly beyond the common calls of life, and which lie latent in the greater part of the species during their whole existence. These examples should perhaps diminish our surprise, that the sublime faculties granted to man so rarely find opportunity for full expansion, and that in whole nations, for many ages, no individual arrives at the intellectual excellence of which he is created capable. It is enough that they are inherent in his nature,

ready to be produced when the general condition of the society in which he lives, and his own rank in that society, make it expedient. If a difficulty can be diminished by extending it, we may allege that it presses as much upon the corporeal as the mental nature of man. For how few of the species are there who acquire the bodily powers of athletes, dancers, or posture-masters; or the nobler and more useful talents of artists of every kind? If we conceive it necessary that a state of things should arrive in which all men should be mathematicians, astronomers, and metaphysicians, it seems equally so that they should be all artificers, painters, and musicians.

But the moralist, while he readily gives up the probability of a general attainment of these points of human excellence, will strongly plead the necessity of supposing a future improvement in *virtue;* for the true definition of this quality being such a disposition of mind or course of conduct as promotes happiness, it must, in all places, conditions, and states of society, be essential to the welfare of man. And, indeed, no prospect can be so cheering to the heart of the philanthropist, as that of a period in which mankind, wisely and faithfully employing the powers with which they are endued, and profiting by the lessons of experience, shall steadily pursue their own and the

general good, and cease to inflict upon themselves and others those evils which are the most numerous and exquisite of the catalogue. If, however, we consider what are the causes of these moral evils, I fear we shall find little reason to expect their abolition, or even their considerable diminution, while man is the creature we every where find him. It may be said of a high degree of moral, as well as of intellectual, excellence, that it is the result of those favorable circumstances in which a comparatively few only of the species can be placed. The early discipline of a good education, a happy immunity both from the stimulus of urgent wants, and the temptations of power and opulence, leisure for the culture of the heart and understanding, freedom from false principles and bad examples, are advantages which can be obtained only under the shelter as it were of social institutions, to the support of which numerous moral sacrifices must be made by the mass of the community. They who are maintained, protected, and governed, without any efforts of their own, may well afford a greater attention to moral duties than those who do all these offices for them. But it is not from such a select and favored class that an idea is to be formed of what the human species is capable of becoming.

Let us now imagine an inhabitant of another

world making a survey of this, in the spirit of a naturalist and a philosopher. He would discern a beautiful economy of things, in which every single species, besides providing for its own existence, is made subservient to the necessities of another species; so that throughout all nature nothing exists purely for itself, but the interests of one are blended and involved with those of another. By virtue of this economy, however, he would find that sacrifices are perpetually made of the advantage and even the being of individuals, and that life is maintained at the expense of life, and enjoyment procured at the expense of enjoyment, throughout the sentient creation. Moreover, he would perceive, that the operations of inanimate powers, such as the elements of fire, air, and water, the principle of gravitation, and the like, though so beneficial on the whole, are often converted into causes of mischief and destruction. He would therefore conclude, that the general system was an inseparable mixture of good and evil; but he would (or I greatly mistake) discern that the good is intentional and preponderant, the evil contingent and subordinate. He would receive it as a complete proof of a wise and well-arranged plan, that, notwithstanding all adverse and destructive processes, every species of being

maintains itself in existence, and preserves the rank in the creation it was destined to occupy.

On turning his view upon the most distinguished and interesting figure among animated forms—the human species—he would see moderate powers of body, inspired by an unknown something, which renders them capable of the most wonderful exertions, and every where establishes a complete superiority over the other animal tribes. He would observe this creature agitated by a vast variety of passions and desires, precipitating him into actions, some injurious to his own happiness and that of his fellow-creatures, others promoting the felicity of both; he would see him building with one hand, and overthrowing with another, cultivating and desolating, adorning and defacing, caressing and murdering; but upon the whole, he would find no reason to doubt that he also followed the general law of creation, and that his existence was a blessing to him, probably the greater in proportion to the superiority of his faculties. Comparing different tribes and individuals of this species, he would be sensible of a wide scope for improvement, general and particular, and would probably expect, from the ready inter-communication of ideas, that it would soon take place. But a closer view of the mecha-

nism of human societies, and the natural tendencies of things, especially if strengthened by a knowledge of past events, would be too apt to lead him to suspect that there existed insuperable obstacles to an extensive melioration. Taking the human race, however, as he found it, he could scarcely conceive that it had undergone any corruption or deterioration, which rendered it a different agent in the great system of nature from what its Author intended it to be. Such a supposition would only enhance to him any difficulty arising from the inadequate employment of the faculties bestowed upon man; and he would sooner rest satisfied in that universal analogy which shows evil every where mixed with good, defect with excellence.

THOUGHTS

ON

THE FORMATION OF CHARACTER.

IN an interesting Memoir of the late Professor Porson, nothing appeared to me more curious and worthy of observation than the manner in which his father habituated him from infancy to the exercise of the faculties of memory and attention, by accustoming him to work all the common rules of arithmetic as far as the extraction of the cube root by the head alone. It is justly remarked, that to this early training he was much indebted for the extraordinary powers he afterwards displayed in storing up knowledge, and applying it to the occasions of that critical investigation in which he so greatly excelled.

There is, in fact, no part of biography so important, with respect to the history of the human mind, as that which points out the external circumstances which have contributed to the formation of moral and intellectual character. It will, indeed, always be matter of doubt in what propor-

tion original conformation, and incidental circumstances, severally operate in this respect, and some reasoners will attribute more to one cause, some to the other. But that both exert a powerful influence cannot be questioned; and as external causes alone are within our direction, it is in the consideration of them that we are to look for practical instruction.

Two characters more different than Richard Porson and Jean Jacques Rousseau can scarcely be conceived, and it is probable that a great part of the difference was original and constitutional; but neither could any two things be more different than the courses of mental training which each underwent. The parents of both were men of parts, in humble life, and were themselves the early teachers of their children. But Porson's father was an unlettered villager, who probably knew nothing of man and his concerns beyond his own narrow circle, and the force of whose mind had been employed upon speculations which had nothing of feeling or fancy attached to them. Rousseau's father, on the contrary, was the citizen of a little republic, full of political intrigue, and in which a taste for general literature was more widely diffused than, perhaps, in any other spot on the globe. The manner in which he opened his son's mind was to read to him till his eighth

year all the romances he could procure, and then to go over with him all Plutarch's Lives, interspersing such remarks as might impress him with patriotic ardor and high notions of moral excellence. It is impossible not to recognise in the subsequent life and writings of this singular man the permanent effects of an education thus expressly calculated to make him all feeling and imagination. If we now conceive the boys to have been contemporaries, and to have changed fathers, we shall scarcely be able to set any bounds to our ideas of the alteration in their respective characters. No one will suppose that Porson would have become Rousseau, or Rousseau Porson; but it is probable that the eloquence and enthusiasm of the one, and the critical investigating spirit of the other, would have been in great measure suppressed, and the native genius of each would have burst out in some new direction.

I confess that I have not much faith in the decisive and indelible effects of single and perhaps unobserved incidents, to which those who adopt the theory of association are apt to ascribe so much in the formation of temper and disposition. I rather impute such effects to the gradual operation of a continued agency, which has time to induce an habitual mode of thinking or feeling, and to convey into the very substance of the mind

what is analogous to the nutritious part of food received into the body. Instances are numerous in the records of biography, in which accidental circumstances, operating in this manner during the susceptible period of early youth, have laid the foundation of those irresistible propensities to particular pursuits which have almost always preceded the attainment of distinguished excellence in them. I shall mention a few of these as they occur to my memory.

The puerile fancy of Cowley was nourished by Spenser's *Faery Queen*, which lay in his mother's parlour-window, and which he had entirely devoured before he was twelve years old. Its product was a little volume of "Poetical Blossoms," published at the age of fifteen or sixteen.

Pope's early fondness for reading led him to the perusal of Ogilby's *Homer* and Sandys's *Ovid*. He was afterwards, while yet a boy, an occasional visitor of the theatre, and the fermentation of verse and heroism in his mind brought forth an Homeric drama, which he procured to be acted by his school-fellows. He did not, it is true, afterwards write tragedies, but he translated Homer.

The father of Goldoni, who was a physician, having indulged his son when a child with the erection of a little theatre at his house, in which the boy and his companions acted plays, after-

wards in vain attempted to bring him up to his own profession, and to that of the law; and he became the most copious writer of comedy in his age.

Richardson, who seems from childhood to have been a formal narrative little man, was early practised in gossip and letter-writing by the circumstance of being chosen by three damsels as the confident of their love affairs and the inditer of their epistles. Who does not see that this secretaryship was the immediate parent of *Pamela*, and the remote progenitor of *Clarissa* and *Grandison?*

Gessner, the pastoral poet and landscape painter, we are told, was extremely backward in acquiring the rudiments of learning, till a sagacious tutor took him out into the fields, and gave him lessons in the midst of the striking objects afforded by nature in Switzerland. These so happily impressed him, that he for ever associated literature with an ardent passion for rural scenery and manners, and charmed his countrymen with his creations of the pen and pencil in this walk.

Sir William Jones had the happiness to receive his first education under a mother who was well qualified to cultivate his promising talents. When he asked her questions about any matter of information, she would answer, "Read, and you will

know;" and by thus habitually connecting reading with the gratification of his curiosity, she inspired him with that insatiable ardor for study which ever distinguished him.

Linnæus was the son of a poor Swedish clergyman, one of whose simple tastes it was to cultivate in his little garden all the kinds of plants which he was able to procure. This garden was the occupation and delight of his son from childhood, and a passion for botany "grew with his growth, and strengthened with his strength."

In all these instances, to which many additions might easily be made, it will be found that not a transient impression, but a course of repeated action or sensation, was the instrument by which that lasting taste or disposition was formed which characterised the man. It may be useful to pursue somewhat further this train of speculation.

In each of the two great branches of human character, the *moral* and the *intellectual*, may be discerned the influence both of original conformation, and of secondary or adventitious circumstances; and it is upon just and precise views of the respective operation of these two sets of causes, that all conclusions, practical and speculative, concerning character are to be founded. The records of biography present numerous facts whereon to build such conclusions; and facts

alone can be relied upon in an inquiry which, in reality, is a department of natural history.

To begin with moral character—The position that *temper* or *disposition* is a radical quality of mind, never entirely to be changed, but only modified in its agency by superinduced habits, or by principles of conduct, which, while they serve to give it a direction as far as their influence extends, leave it the supreme arbiter of life and manners in other points—will probably receive illustration and proof from the following examples.

Cato the Younger was characterised almost from infancy by a firm unyielding temper, joined with a slow but solid understanding, which rendered indelible, impressions once formed, and made him immutable in his purposes. This disposition, in an untutored and ill-governed mind, might have been mere vicious stubbornness and obstinacy; but the maxims of Roman patriotism and Grecian philosophy elevated it to a moral heroism of which history affords few parallels. It is related, that Popedius Silo, one of the deputies sent to the Italian states to demand their participation in the rights of Roman citizenship, having been entertained as a guest in the house of Livius Drusus, uncle and guardian to Cato and his brother Cæpio, once, in a playful manner, requested the two

boys to intercede with their relation in his behalf. Cæpio readily promised compliance; but Cato, who had doubtless been nourished in all the lofty sentiments of a Roman, looked in silence at Popedius with an expression of displeasure.—Unable by soft words to overcome his surliness, Popedius carried him to the window, and threatening to throw him out, held him as if ready to let him drop; but the boy bore it without the least indication of fear, or a single conciliatory expression. Popedius had sagacity enough to discern in this scene the future bulwark of his country's rights. At the age of fourteen, being taken to pay his respects to the dictator Sylla, with whom his family was connected, and seeing a number of heads of noble victims carried out from an inner apartment, he asked of his Greek preceptor, Why such a man was suffered to live? "Because (he replied) Sylla is still more feared than hated." "Give *me*, then, a sword (said young Cato), that I may free my country from tyranny;" and this he uttered with so stern and determined an air, that his tutor was obliged to watch him closely, lest he should put his purpose in execution. Here were manifestly the dawnings of that great character which matured and principled by the stoic philosophy, produced the invincible assertor of Roman liberty, and the most upright of patriots. In the

earlier ages of the republic it might also have been marked with unfeeling severity; but letters had softened Cato into humanity, and no man displayed more substantial kindness upon adequate occasions. His unsubmitting spirit, indeed, sometimes led him into useless and imprudent opposition; and his strict adherence to the rule of right embarrassed his friends as much as his enemies; but it was not his fault that the times were unfit for him.

John Lilburne, the English republican, was not inferior to Cato in firmness of resolution and unyielding intrepidity. Perhaps there was more of the restless and contentious mixed in his disposition; yet the differences between the two characters may be chiefly ascribed to the difference of their education and situation in life. John was an apprentice in London when he first exhibited his impatience of tyranny by a complaint before the chamberlain against his master for ill usage. He then began to study the divinity of the time, which was all turned to controversial disputation, and he became a zealous puritan, with all the austerity of the sect. The Book of Martyrs inspired him with an enthusiastic fervor for acting and suffering in what he deemed the righteous cause. He was soon called upon to suffer, and no one could go through his trials with a more

unsubdued spirit. His stedfast appeals to the laws of his country and the privileges of Englishmen, procured him great popularity with the inferior classes, and the title of Freeborn John. Lilburne passed a life of contest against power in every hand in which it was placed, of dispute with all his superiors in command, and of virulent controversy on civil and religious topics. He was a brave soldier, but never found an authority under which he could continue to act. He appears to have been fond of contention for its own sake; yet without doubt there was much of principle in his constant opposition to injustice and oppression, and the event often proved him to be in the right. That a kind of ridicule is attached to his memory, is perhaps chiefly owing to the contemptible nature of many of the disputes in which he was engaged, and the vulgarity of his style and manners.

The philanthropist John Howard (no man ever better deserved that title) was equal to either of the former in firmness of mind, but it was unattended with the litigious propensity of the last, and was accompanied with a singular restlessness that perpetually urged him to some active pursuit. With only an ordinary share of moral principle, this might have rendered him merely a busy man, occupied in gratifying a mutable curiosity with persevering industry; but christianity was to him

what stoicism was to Cato; "Non sibi sed toti genitum se credere mundo"—a system of practical benevolence, impelling him to sacrifice his repose and hazard his life in promoting the welfare of his fellow-creatures. His determined spirit, and his love of action, were modified and directed by this great principle. It rendered him in his peregrinations as superior to the calls of appetite, as Cato was in the deserts of Africa; and enabled him to face the dangers of disease with as much courage as a soldier could display on the day of battle. It overcame even curiosity and the love of knowledge, and fixed his attention to the one great business of benevolence which he had undertaken.

> He keeps his object ever full in sight,
> And that assurance holds him firm and right.
>
> DRYDEN.

In the preceding instances, native resolution was actuated by motives which outweighed the selfish principle, and inspired a course of conduct of which public good was the object. In the class of men who have popularly obtained the denomination of *great* we shall always meet with the fundamental quality above mentioned, but too frequently under a very different direction. An example or two of this kind may usefully be adduced by way of comparison.

Julius Cæsar, brought up as a young man of rank in a most dissolute metropolis, was for a time whirled in the vortex of pleasure, and confined his exertions to exploits of gallantry and the attainment of splendid accomplishments. Yet the firmness with which he resisted the terrible Sylla, who imperiously urged him to divorce his wife, the daughter of Cinna; and the commanding intrepidity he displayed when a captive among pirates; gave manifest tokens of a character born for distinction in any walk of life which he should finally pursue. The prospects of ambition at length opened on his mind; and meeting with no principle to circumscribe them within the limits of legitimate power, he entered upon that career, which led him by undeviating steps to the subversion of the liberties of his country. The union of indefatigable activity and prompt decision with daring enterprize, gave him a superiority over all his competitors, and ensured success to his plans. There appears to have been in his composition either a native mildness, or an acquired spirit of moderation, which rendered him one of the most clement of conquerors in a civil war; but the baneful effects of uncontroled power on the temper were beginning to show themselves before he was made a sacrifice to patriotic vengeance.

Intrepidity and resolution have seldom been

more conspicuous than in the character of Cromwell. This extraordinary person seems in his youth to have been noted for a turbulent ungovernable disposition, which threw him into a licentious course of life. From this he was reclaimed by an early marriage and admission into respectable society; and he soon began to attach himself to that party in which an appearance, at least, of sanctity was requisite to gain reputation. Nor can it be doubted that his mind, naturally prone to enthusiasm, imbibed a portion of real religious fervor. But his projects for advancement rendered it necessary for him to affect more than he felt; and in a mixture which, remarkable as it may seem, is not uncommon, he combined hypocrisy and cunning with fanaticism. Had not, however, the civil contests of the time terminated in an appeal to the sword, he might have remained only distinguished in the group as a busy oppositionist and a long-winded canter, greatly inferior in talents and accomplishments to the parliamentary leaders. But the vigor and abilities that he displayed in the field gained him the confidence of his party; and being shackled by no principle, he made use of his acquired credit to supplant his competitors, and raise himself to sovereign power. Had this man been originally bred to arms under a settled government, it is highly probable that

he would have attained an elevated rank, in which his turbulent spirit might possibly have incited him to embroil affairs for the purpose of further advancement; but the habitual dissimulation and hypocrisy which the peculiar circumstances of the time rendered necessary to his actual progress, might never have formed an essential part of his character.

Inflexibility was the base of the extraordinary character of Charles XII. of Sweden. In his youth he was stubborn and indocile; and having the disadvantage of being born heir to a monarchy, he might have been totally uneducated, had not means been found of working upon that spirit of emulation which was one of his active principles. He was induced to learn Latin by being told that the kings of Denmark and Poland were proficients in that language. He read Quintus Curtius, and from that time the ardor for martial glory seems to have taken possession of his breast. Alexander became his hero and the model for his imitation; but without the splendid qualities of that conqueror, he possessed what he wanted—resolution to resist the allurements of pleasure. When called forth to action by the unjust aggression of his neighbours, he for ever renounced the society of the fair sex and the use of wine, and steeled himself to all the toils and hardships of a

military life. His temper, naturally insensible, was rendered more unfeeling by the principles of arbitrary power, which caused the lives and fortunes of his subjects to appear as nothing in his sight, whilst pursuing his romantic schemes of conquest. In all his subsequent adventures, his successes and failures, the same inflexibility, or obstinacy as it might justly be termed, characterised him. He appeared a hero at Narva, and a madman at Bender; but he was radically the same in both—inaccessible to fear, to pity, to all the common feelings of human nature. He would excellently have filled the part of Talus the Iron Man in Spenser; but to the lasting injury of his country, and the disturbance of Europe, fortune had made him the directing head as well as the executing arm. He was as ready to fight for a punctilio as for a kingdom, and nothing but a bullet could stop his career.

Virgil, in his third Georgic, describing the tokens by which a generous nature may be discerned in the young steed, mentions the impulse to take the lead of his fellows, and to be the first in every daring adventure:

> Primus et ire viam, et fluvios tentare minaces
> Audet, et ignoto sese committere ponti.

The same spirit is said to show itself in young

hounds of an excellent breed, and in various other animals of superior races.

The human species is not devoid of individuals born with similar indications of nobleness of nature—with a strong aspiration after excellence, and readiness to undergo any toils and hardships in pursuit of it. Happy is the parent or instructor to whose share one of these choice productions has fallen; for with this temper of mind there is no point of attainment within the reach of the pupil's faculties that may not be expected. It is, however, a disposition that requires peculiar delicacy and attention in the management: for when suffered to run untrained, or misdirected in its objects, it may easily be the source of more mischief than benefit, both to its owner and to society. Its almost inseparable companion is an ardent thirst of praise and admiration; and these are so often bestowed by the world without judgement or consideration, that unless a true estimate of things be first established in the youth's own mind, this emotion, so useful as a stimulative, may be exercised upon the most frivolous or improper objects. Another frequent attendant upon this disposition is the ambition of grasping at a great number of attainments at the same time, in order to dazzle beholders by unexpected combinations of excellence; through the indulgence of which desire,

real excellence in any is often precluded, and fine abilities are seen to blossom without bringing any fruit to maturity. For these reasons, there is no class of minds in which so much may be usefully done by discipline and instruction towards the formation of character, as that which is our present subject—a fact which will be rendered apparent by those biographical examples both of excellence and defect which will occupy the remaining part of this paper.

The most splendid instance of the passion for excelling, presented by history, is that of Alexander the Great. This prince, to whom fortune gave the means ready prepared of rising to the summit of martial fame, would probably have distinguished himself in any condition. The tamer of Bucephalus and the pupil of Aristotle could scarcely have been a common man. It is in some respects unfortunate for mankind that there should be a class of human beings, so much elevated above the rest of the species, that they can scarcely find any object on which to exercise the desire of pre-eminence, at the same time innocent, and sufficiently dignified. Thus Alexander refused to enter his name at the Olympic games unless he could have kings for competitors; and the great game of contending for the empire of the world was the only one that could satisfy his noble emu-

lation. Even in this he seems rather to have been moved by the passion of accomplishing difficult and extraordinary tasks, than by the vulgar desire of aggrandisement; and the conqueror in him was subordinate to the hero. In the pursuit of this object he showed himself, at least in the early part of his career, superior to the allurements of ease and luxury, and capable of confronting every kind of toil and danger; and thus has established a claim to that genuine ardor for excelling, which cannot be gratified without the consciousness of personal merits. Sovereigns have such easy methods of indulging the wish for distinction, that no force of mind is required for the attempt. An Egyptian king had only to employ all his subjects in the idle work of erecting a loftier pyramid than any of his predecessors had done, to render his name eternally illustrious among a people of slaves. In more enlightened countries, the building of sumptuous palaces, and the formation of grand establishments for the arts and sciences, though costing nothing to the monarch but an exertion of his will, shall perpetuate his memory with the most magnificent eulogies. Thus Louis XIV. by nature cold and inactive, by education uninformed and illiterate, having in the pride of self-consequence said to himself—In whatever point other kings have been great, I will be so too —employed the stock of wealth, power, and talent

which he inherited with his crown, in such a manner as to become the most conspicuous name in Europe during half a century, though without a quality which could have distinguished him from the mass, if born in a humble condition.

To return from the spurious to the genuine exemplifications of the class in question—One of the most memorable examples afforded by history of the passion for excelling, joined with talents and industry, and many advantages of nature and fortune, is that of Alcibiades. This celebrated Athenian displayed from childhood the resolution which is essential to greatness of character, as we learn from the following remarkable incident: Being at play with other boys in the street, a loaded waggon came up just as the game required him to run across: he called to the driver to stop, and finding that he paid no regard to his mandate, he threw himself upon the ground before the wheel, and bade the man drive on if he chose. Many were the frolics of his youth, in all of which he exhibited a daring and imperious temper, and a resolution to distinguish himself in every thing he undertook. He was an attentive and favorite pupil of Socrates, and at the same time the most noted debauchee in Athens. He was an eloquent speaker, a valiant commander, and a deep politician, whilst he was the first racer at the Olympic games, and dazzled all Greece by

his profuse magnificence. He was every thing in extremes, and nothing moderately. In Sparta he was admired as a pattern of abstemiousness and hardiness, and in Persia he surpassed a satrap in luxury. Every where he was an object of wonder, but no where long of esteem; and for want of fixed principles and steadiness of conduct he passed his life in perpetual change, and at length perished miserably; a signal example of the abuse of great talents, with powers of mind capable of bringing them into full exertion, but misdirected in their application.

Various parallels might be found to the character of Alcibiades, the splendor of which seems to have made it an object of emulation to men of parts and of loose principles. As far as the passion for exciting admiration by extraordinary actions and accomplishments was its prominent feature, that of the Duke of Wharton nearly resembled it. Of this nobleman, Pope, in his finely drawn portrait (*Moral Ess.* Ep. 1.) says, that the "ruling passion was the lust of praise:" and that

> Born with whate'er could win it from the wise,
> Women and fools * must like him, or he dies;
> Tho' wond'ring senates hung on all he spoke,
> The club must hail him master of the joke, &c.

* A most injurious combination, characteristic of the splenetic misogynist who made it!

In Wharton this propensity seems to have been of a lower quality than in Alcibiades, and attended with inferior powers of exertion. Accordingly, the Athenian never sunk into the contempt which attended the Englishman, but in the lowest ebb of his fortune retained consequence enough to make him feared. Wharton ended "flagitious but not great."

When the love of praise preponderates the desire of excelling, or when the latter is occupied with unworthy objects, the character is chiefly marked by childish vanity and incongruity. Even the detestable Nero displayed a great passion for being admired in the arts of poetry, music, and acting; and not entirely satisfied with the hired or compelled acclamations of his servile audiences, he actually took great pains, and underwent many privations, to qualify himself for appearing before the refined connoisseurs of Greece. He was much more affected by being called, in the manifesto of one who had taken up arms against him, "a sorry musician," than by all the reproaches for his cruelty and misgovernment; and amidst the terrors of his approaching fate, frequently repeated, "What an artist I perish!"

The emperor Julian was a singularly compounded character, the basis of which was a passion for becoming conspicuous; and though in

some points it displayed itself in puerile vanity, in others it inspired exertions worthy of his high station. Early a convert to heathen philosophy, he adopted with fanatical zeal all the tenets of pagan theology, and pried with futile curiosity into all its mysteries; but at the same time he practised all those high lessons of self-command, temperance, and contempt of pomp and splendor, which are infinitely more difficult to a philosopher on the throne, than to one in the schools. Vain of his learning and talents, and imbued with the spirit of literary equality, he descended to act the haranguer, the disputant, and the satirist, and sunk the dignity of the emperor in the loquacity of the sophist. Yet he aimed, not unsuccessfully, at the glory of a legislator; and, more unhappily and inconsistently, at that of a conqueror; aspiring to be at the same time an Antoninus and an Alexander. After emulating the greatest warriors in courage, activity, and the endurance of hardship of every kind, he lost his life and brought the empire into extreme danger, by a rash attack upon a foe from whom, even in better times, the Roman arms had reaped little but disgrace. He was, in fact, an enthusiast clad in a philosopher's mantle.

The ambition to excel has rarely appeared with more lustre than in the two famous orators of

Greece and Rome, Demosthenes and Cicero; for in both it was accompanied with a steadiness of pursuit, and a limitation to important objects, which raised them to high distinction in their several states, and has perpetuated their names among those of the greatest characters of antiquity.

In Demosthenes the passion was more confined, embracing only the wish of attaining the first rank among the political orators of his country; and numerous are the anecdotes recorded of his indefatigable efforts to overcome the natural defects under which he labored, and to surpass all the most eloquent speakers of his time. It was, indeed, no common object of emulation to become the man,

> quem mirabantur Athenæ
> Torrentem, et pleni moderantem frænа theatri.
>
> JUVENAL.

or, in the words of Milton, who

> Wielded at will that fierce democraty,
> Shook th' arsenal, and fulmin'd over Greece,
> To Macedon, and Artaxerxes' throne. *Par Reg.*

And although his love of praise may be thought to have stooped to a vulgar gratification when he was delighted to hear one market-woman say to another—That is the famous Demosthenes!—yet those women were Athenians; and he knew at the

same time that the Macedonian court by its hatred bore an equal testimony to his reputation. Though not superior to corruption, he possessed a fund of real patriotism, and the liberty of his country expired with him.

Cicero was so much favored by nature in genius and disposition, that while yet a school-boy he became the pride and wonder of his young companions. The facility, however, with which he obtained youthful distinction did not slacken his efforts in pursuit of mature excellence; and when he had determined upon the forum as his chief scene of action, there was no study connected with the theory and practice of perfect oratory in which he did not engage with the greatest ardor. His ideas of this perfection were more extended than those of Demosthenes, as his topics of public speaking were more varied. He had likewise a peculiar relish for philosophical discussion; and having, during the course of his education, furnished his mind from the copious stores of Grecian literature in this branch of research, he was enabled, after the subversion of the Roman constitution had set him aside from professional duties, to distinguish himself as the greatest writer on morals and philosophy in the Latin language. How much that thirst of praise which stimulated him to these extraordinary exertions was the foible

of this admirable person, is too well known ; but though weakly covetous of fame, his excellent sense and liberal principles led him to seek it in the paths of true glory.

Sir William Jones appears to have been inspired with as pure and honorable a passion for excelling, as almost any individual upon record. He was not less distinguished among the companions of his early studies than Cicero himself; and his masters might confidently predict that he would turn out no common man. Perhaps he had something of the splendid fault so frequently accompanying this cast of character, the ambition of aiming at too many acquisitions at once; but how few have really equalled him in the extent of his knowledge and the brilliancy of his performances! It is, indeed, a kind of presumption to set limits to the capacities of a mind endued with great natural powers, and excited to action by a strong and unremitting impulse. Many examples prove that much more may be effected by generous enterprize than timid indolence would conceive possible ; and although we may sometimes wish that ardor were spontaneously tempered by discretion, yet we should be reluctant to damp it by discouragement or censure.

It is scarcely necessary to prolong this paper by instances of the passion in question displayed

by the votaries of particular arts or professions, since wherever superior excellence is found, that may be presumed to have preceded. Those arts which address themselves in a peculiar manner to public admiration exhibit the emulative spirit in a high degree, and the history of painting and sculpture affords remarkable examples of its agency. But when thus confined to one object, and to that with which every flattering prospect in life is connected, it perhaps does not so clearly designate the general disposition, as when operating more excursively. It cannot, however, be doubted, that when the pursuit of excellence has occupied the whole man during life, as in the case of Michael Angelo, the same temper would have shown itself under any circumstances. It is, indeed, a disposition so ready to burst forth into display, that it scarcely admits of concealment; and as Dryden beautifully says of Mrs. Killegrew, whom he represents as fired with the passion for universal excellence, the "bright soul breaks out on every side."

ON SELF-BIOGRAPHERS.

As it must be admitted that men know more of their own story than any other persons can know of them, an obvious advantage arises from the disclosures they may choose to make to the public, as being more exact and particular than can be given by any other pen. This is especially the case with respect to those early periods of life which precede entrance on the open stage of the world; and also to a number of minute domestic facts which, however trifling in appearance, are often of fundamental consequence in the elucidation of character. As far, then, as it is interesting to contemplate the history of any human being from its very origin, and to mark the rise and progress of those qualities, moral and intellectual, by which he is distinguished from every other individual, the information communicated by himself must be peculiarly valuable. Who, for example, but Montaigne himself was likely to have acquainted us

with that singular mode of education by which he was *talked* into a knowledge of the learned languages, without ever committing to memory the common rules of grammar; and was initiated into that course of promiscuous and excursive reading, which, while it stored his mind with a vast mass of fact and opinion, and freed him from the shackles of the schools, also rendered him that lax and irregular thinker which we find him in his Essays? What friend of Franklin's knew him so early and intimately as to have been able to relate those circumstances relative to the manner in which he passed his childhood and youth, which, in his own narrative, so instructively point out the steps of his progress to that character of practical wisdom, public and private, for which he was so conspicuous? What other person but Rousseau himself was acquainted with the impressions his mind underwent in childhood, from that course of novel-reading, followed by political lectures on Plutarch's Lives, by which his father administered fuel to his imagination, and at the same time inculcated the high sentiments of republican equality?

But it is chiefly in this disclosure of unknown facts, and the secret workings of the soul to which no other mortal is conscious, that the peculiar advantage of autobiography consists; for nothing is

more rare than that degree of self-knowledge which enabes a person, even if wishing to be sincere, to draw a true portraiture of himself. Though a man who internally feels all his own foibles ought to be more sensible of them than a by-stander, who observes them only in their occasional operation, yet such is the blinding power of the self-love which is rooted in every bosom, that they are often rendered either wholly inconspicuous to their owners, or appear with such softenings and modifications that they are scarcely recognised in their proper character. Hence what promises in the outset to be a frank confession of a fault, is sometimes so diluted and neutralized in the progress, that its effect on the mind of an unwary reader is almost obliterated. A remarkable example of this juggle of self-love is afforded by a passage of Lord Clarendon's Life of himself, where he is speaking in the third person of his own temper and habits. "He indulged his palate *very much*, and even took *some delight* in eating and drinking well, but without *any approach* to luxury; and in truth rather *discoursed* like an epicurean, than *was one*." Here the language is so ludicrously inconsistent, that the noble writer must have labored under an extraordinary degree of mental obscuration not to have perceived it. In another passage the same want of self-know-

ledge is displayed, but without such a contradiction in terms. "He was in his nature inclined to pride and passion, and to a humor between wrangling and disputing, very troublesome; which good company in a short time so reformed and mastered, that no man was more affable and courteous, &c." Now the fact was, that a stately, unbending, ungracious behaviour, always adhered to this eminent person, and was one cause why in his prosperity his enemies were much more numerous than his friends.

Another manner in which self-importance gives a bias to autobiographers is in leading them to imagine that there is something very peculiar and extraordinary in their own characters, and in the incidents of their lives. It is flattering to a man's vanity to indulge the conception that he is formed in a different mould from other mortals, and is marked out by events as one destined to act a part appropriate to himself on the theatre of the world. This humor is happily exposed by Shakespear in the person of Glendower :—

> ———— At my nativity
> The front of heaven was full of fiery shapes, &c.

And after much rodomontade of this kind, he adds,

> These signs have marked me extraordinary,
> And all the courses of my life do shew
> I am not in the roll of common men.

The "Religio Medici" of Sir Thomas Browne is filled with similar assertions of the writer's singularities in mind and disposition, as well as with extravagant pretensions to almost universal knowledge, at the same time that he disclaims the remotest disposition to pride or self-conceit. The celebrated Lord Herbert of Cherbury has exhibited in his Memoirs a propensity of the same kind. Persons in whom pious feelings predominate, are led by this infirmity to arrogate the special protection of Providence, and to find miraculous interpositions in their favor in the common escapes from difficulty or danger.

For this tendency, however, a reader will soon know how to make due allowance: and the little ebullitions of self-consequence appearing in such forms are rather amusing than deceptive, and indeed exhibit a feature of real portraiture; but there are causes of misrepresentation in autobiography, the effects of which are less obvious to detection. In order to be put sufficiently on our guard against these sources of error, it is necessary to consider the motives that usually influence persons to become the narrators of their own history.

The desire of being favorably known to the world must be regarded as nearly universal in self-biographers; for although there is a kind of

blabbing loquacity in some men which urges them to write, as well as to talk, of themselves solely for the gratification they find in it, yet, as this disposition is usually accompanied with a degree of vanity, a secret purpose of showing themselves off in the fairest coloring will scarcely fail to become an additional motive. Hence, in all the confessions that are made before the public with so much apparent frankness, although foibles, defects, and even some vices are readily acknowledged, yet care is taken to suppress every thing that would indicate meanness, dishonesty, selfishness, cowardice, and all those propensities which debase a character in universal estimation. And if the writer occasionally discloses facts which would injure him in the estimation of an exact moralist, it is because, not being such himself, he is not aware of the consequence. I recollect no instance of a man's betraying his own secrets at the hazard of appearing both contemptible and odious, so extraordinary as that of the Confessions of Rousseau; but his cast of mind was so singular, and indeed in some points approached so nearly to insanity, that his conduct can scarcely be cited as an exception to the preceding remark. It is, moreover, evident that in this very work (which, too, was posthumous) his object was to inculcate a very exalted opinion of himself in the

most essential points; and he probably thought that the amelioration of his character by philosophy obliterated all the stains of his early life. In the same manner, fanatical religionists are ready to charge themselves with having been the worst of sinners previously to that regeneration which has made them saints.

That remarkable character, Cardan, was also one who, with high boasts of himself, has confessed to faults of temper and conduct, which cannot fail to depreciate him in the estimation of every sober reader of his life: but it is apparent that his moral sense was by no means delicate; for when he mentions his unhappy son, who was executed for the murder of his wife, he represents him as an injured sufferer, rather than as a victim to justice. In like manner we find that vain-glorious artist, Benvenuto Cellini, in his curious memoirs, mentioning his acts of violence and brutal revenge more as matter of boast, than of penitence. In professed *Apologies* no one would look for much sincerity of confession; yet the loose unabashed character of Colley Cibber has rendered his biography of himself, under that title, a tolerably resembling portrait of the coxcomb and libertine; and certain female *apologists*, whose reputation was past retrieving, have not scrupled to record their slips with reasonable fidelity, for they

risked nothing in exposing themselves, and thereby gained an opportunity of exposing others. The Marshal de Bassompierre, another autobiographer, is at no pains to conceal his deep and successful gaming, and the unbounded license of his amours, because, though devout enough in the Roman Catholic form, he felt no compunction for these peccadilloes, which could not hurt his character as a gentleman. Polonius, in Hamlet, when he directs his servant to throw some slanders upon his son Laertes, by way of fishing out his secrets from his companions, only cautions him to

> ——————— breathe his faults so quaintly
> That they may seem the taints of liberty,
> The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind,
> A savageness in unreclaimed blood.

These observations may suffice to show that open confession of some faults by no means implies that others are not concealed; and that although we may safely admit all the ill a man speaks of himself, we must not conclude that one who knew him thoroughly could not bring to light a great deal more. And on the whole, it may be taken for granted that the portraits of persons drawn by their own hands will, if likenesses, at least be flattering ones; and that the narratives of their lives, if composed by themselves, will, in-

deed, be rendered interesting by circumstances which could not be communicated by others; but, at the same time, by the suppression of some facts, and the misrepresentation of others, will mislead the reader who has no means of checking them by different relations. If we possessed no other account of Margaret of Valois, the divorced queen of Henry IV., and one of the most licentious women in France, than her own memoirs, she might pass for a model of chastity.

Of the works of this class, we have many written by statesmen, generals, and persons employed in important public transactions, one object of whom may be generally concluded to have been the giving a favorable view of the part they themselves acted on the scene; for it would be too much to expect of human nature that a public man should sit down to make a statement of his own errors, purely for the benefit of his successors. Such narratives, therefore, though often highly valuable for the information they convey, as being derived from sources inaccessible to other writers, must always be read with a degree of scepticism. We know that Cæsar, notwithstanding the air of unpretending simplicity in his Commentaries, was charged in his own time with having passed over in silence various instances of failure and defeat. If Cicero's different narra-

tives of the acts of his consulate had been transmitted to posterity, though they might have acquainted us with some circumstances of which we are now ignorant, yet we may be sure that he who did not scruple to request his friend Lucceius to violate the faith of history by throwing a lustre on his deeds beyond their desert, would not have been more scrupulous in sacrificing truth to vanity with his own pen. Vanity, indeed, is a failing which, when strongly marked, may justly impair our reliance upon the narrator of his own actions, how estimable soever in other points. Such a person will at least exaggerate, and give a disproportionate consequence to the transactions in which he was concerned. It was said of the brave but gasconading Montluc, that he was one "qui multa fecit, plura scripsit"—who did much, but bragged of more. The vanity and self-importance conspicuous in Bishop Burnet contributed much to weaken the authority of his *History of his own Times;* and though his reputation for veracity appears in the main to have been gaining ground, it cannot be doubted that he over-rated his own share in many of the affairs of which he is the relator. It was said of Burnet's work, that it might be justly styled "The importance of a Man to himself"—a title well merited by perhaps the generality of auto-biographies.

Such are the advantages and defects of this class of biographical writings. They are commonly entertaining and interesting; they afford materials for the history of the human mind which can scarcely be obtained from other sources, and are especially valuable for the means they present of tracing the original formation of characters: at the same time they are almost universally partial in the statement of facts; frequently mislead by arrogating to their subjects a greater degree of merit and consequence than belongs to them; and perhaps never pourtray with that truth of resemblance which would be given by a sagacious and impartial observer. It is worth while to read all the most noted of these works, but always with a limited and suspended confidence.

ON THE ATTACHMENT TO MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS.

EVERY one who has visited Scotland, or has read travels into that country, must have been struck with the great popularity attached to the memory of Queen Mary, displayed in the association of her name with all the places of her temporary residence, and with the scenes of her transactions; so that a stranger to Scottish history might suppose that the glory and felicity of her reign had eclipsed those of every other in that country, and had thrown all its other sovereigns into oblivion. Yet the fact is so much the reverse, that scarcely ever has a reign been more unfortunate, or a sovereign less entitled to the gratitude of subjects. Setting aside all the controverted points relative to the misconduct of this unhappy princess, it cannot be disputed, that, being educated in France among her maternal ancestry, the Guises, she from childhood fixed all her affections exclusively upon that country—that on her marriage with the

Dauphin she was prevailed upon secretly to sign away that independence of which the Scottish nation has always been so jealous, and to make over her hereditary realm, in failure of issue, as a gift to the crown of France—that she came to Scotland with a rooted aversion to the country and its inhabitants—that she was a bigoted adherent to a religion which the majority of her subjects had discarded—that in contempt of the native nobility, and in defiance of decorum, she gave all her confidence (if nothing more) to an insolent Italian upstart—and that after scenes which involved the Scottish name in disgrace throughout Europe, and which implied, if not the blackest guilt, at least the greatest indelicacy, self-will, and indiscretion on her part, she was the cause of a civil war, which terminated in her perpetual exile from her country. I well know that much may be said in extenuation of most of these instances of misconduct, and that Mary may deserve more to be pitied than to be detested; but to select her as the object of fond attachment, and consecrate her memory as the English do that of Elizabeth, and the French of Henry IV., is surely unworthy of the acknowledged good sense of the Scotch nation.

It is not difficult, however, to assign causes for this national partiality; and three especially may

be pointed out as having operated upon different sets of people.

The patriots of Scotland, warm in the recollection of its struggles for independence against England, forget every thing in Mary but the unjust treatment she met with from her English rival, and regard her as the victim of a system of policy directed to the subjugation of their country. They pardon her subserviency to France, from the consideration, that to its connection with that kingdom, Scotland was indebted for its chief support against the usurpations of England. It is enough to excite their zeal in her favor, that she was a Scottish queen unjustly put to death by an English one; and all her faults are sunk in her political martyrdom. The motive to this class, of which the excess alone can be blamed, is *nationality.*

Another set of Mary's advocates are chiefly instigated by partiality for the house of Stuart, a feeling once very predominant in Scotland, and widely diffused in the sister country by the spirit of jacobitism. To all these, the Queen of Scots is the revered relic of an ancient royal house, and the progenitor of that favorite race of sovereigns which long held the sceptre of the combined kingdoms. The resistance to her government, first raised by the Scottish calvinists, whose

principles of state partook of republicanism, appears to them in the light of a criminal rebellion, and they espouse her cause as the sacred cause of monarchy. The zeal of this class may be denominated *party*.

The third, and perhaps most numerous, tribe of Mary's admirers are the *sentimentalists*. These form to their imaginations a figure of exquisite beauty, adorned with every amiable quality and elegant accomplishment, and fondly sympathise with all its distresses, as those of a fair and innocent sufferer, inflicted by a jealous rival. The scene of her execution, so pathetically painted by two historians little favorable to her memory, melts them to compassion, and they cannot think that one who died so heroically could have lived guiltily. The tender, the romantic, the poetical, in both kingdoms indifferently, indulge this sensibility whenever the charming Queen of Scots is recalled to mind; and due allowance, certainly, ought to be made for feelings springing from so pure a source. We learn from history that the *interesting* queen Joan of Naples, who also had the misfortune of being charged with the murder of her husband, was the object of similar emotions. At the same time it must not be thought extraordinary if those who have been accustomed to form their estimate of characters with a little

more moral consideration, should be backward in participating of this amiable enthusiasm. In fact, few things are more prejudicial to morality than indulgence to gross faults and crimes, on account of qualifications which imply little estimable in the owners, and are useless to those with whom they are connected. The grand inquiry relative to persons in every station of life ought to be, how they have acquitted themselves in the first line of their duty. For failures here, no inferior merits can compensate.

I cannot conclude without a serious admonition to the respectable patriots of Scotland no longer to countenance a weak and childish attachment, which is injurious to the memory of their other sovereigns, and inconsistent with the sobriety and manliness of the national character.

ON THE IMITATIVE PRINCIPLE.

EDUCATION is the process by which a creature is conducted from the weak and imperfect condition of new existence, to a state of maturity. It takes place, therefore, in some degree with respect to the whole animal creation, which, by the constitution of nature, has this progress to pass through. In the inferior classes, however, it consists in mere corporeal change, effected by the sure operation of natural causes, without any adventitious aid. The young of many animals are dropt into the midst of all they want, furnished with faculties enabling them spontaneously to make a proper use of what is provided for their nutriment. These might be called the favorites of nature, were not the extent of their enjoyments as limited as their procurement is easy. The young of the more perfect animals are not qualified so soon to live independently. Strength and cunning are requisite to many, in order to secure

their subsistence and protect them from their enemies. A task, therefore, devolves upon their parents, which consists of two parts; the providing of food and shelter for their bodies, and the instructing of them in those arts of life which they will hereafter have occasion to practise. With regard to the latter, however, nature seems chiefly to rely upon that *principle of imitation* which she has implanted in the young of all animals, and which prompts them to make attempts at doing all they see done, till by repeated trials they attain the power of doing the like. This principle alone probably suffices for the education of animals in general, though in some instances we discern efforts in the parent to point and direct it. Thus, the parent bird is not content with flying in the sight of her young ones, but takes manifest pains in instructing and encouraging them to fly.

Among the less civilized tribes of mankind, the imitative principle, with a slight degree of attention in directing it, constitutes almost the whole of education. The young savage, as soon as he is able to use his limbs, accompanies his father to the chace or the fishery, makes his little bow and arrows, sets his traps for small birds, in short, does in miniature all that he sees done by his elders, in copying whose actions he places his utmost

ambition. If active and ingenious by nature, he acquires every thing almost of his own accord, and gives no trouble to an instructor. He learns the use of language by imitation, selects his food and chooses his pastimes by imitation, adopts ceremonial observances and superstitions by imitation, practises the arts of life by imitation; and, in fine, squares his whole conduct according to that principle. Some more curious points of knowledge or skill, some secrets which long experience has taught, may be communicated to him by his parents in the way of positive instruction; and constraint may be occasionally used to force him to apply to a difficult or laborious task. But in general, this is unnecessary. The arts requisite in savage life are simple, and skill in them is to be obtained by repeated practice alone. Their obvious utility, and the honor gained by excelling in them, are motives sufficient to stimulate the emulation of the young; and what they imitate, they soon equal. With modes and habits of life, sentiments and opinions are acquired, and thus the new generation becomes an exact copy of the old. This is what may be called *natural education.* Its effects, as far as they go, are certain; and there is no more doubt that the young of the human species thus brought up will resemble their parents, than that the young of any

other animal will do so. This education prevails in its utmost perfection among the savage Americans; and it is curious to remark how, through its means, with scarcely any artificial instruction, and with the least possible restraint on freedom of action, the same end has been attained of forming a warlike character, with all its love of glory, fear of shame, endurance of hardship, and contempt of pain and death, which was effected by the severe and unnatural rigors of the Spartan discipline.

Even in civilized societies a greater share of education is intrusted to simple imitation than is, perhaps, generally conceived. The common exercise of the limbs, the practice of numerous little arts, the use of language itself, that noble distinction of man from inferior animals, are all imbibed without direct instruction. Manners, customs, the decencies of life, and even sentiments of morality and religion, are in great measure derived from the propensity to imitate and adopt whatever is habitually heard and seen. Great part of the wisdom of the wise and of the virtue of the good is thus insensibly acquired: indeed, so much is done by it, that it may rather be made a question what else is requisite in education, than what is the efficacy of this. And surely if it can be shown that what is most valuable to the man can

be obtained at no other expense than that of setting proper examples in the way of the child, for his spontaneous imitation, such a training will be thought preferable to the elaborate and uncertain process of artificial instruction.

It cannot escape observation, that in the list of things which young people are usually set to learn, some may be termed *essential*, and others only *subordinate;* and though all persons will not agree in the particulars which are to be referred to each of these classes, yet it will be generally allowed that the *essential* are such as exert the greatest influence upon after-life. To secure these, though at the expense of the others, ought to be the care of every wise parent; and the first step to it is, that parents themselves should resign the vanity of *showing off* their children by forced acquisitions which are only admired in them as children, and are thrown by and forgotten on the approach to maturity. It is very much on their account that children are secluded from family society, and banished to boarding-schools, where they live in severe restraint or rude familiarity, estranged from all domestic endearments, and deprived of the means of knowing any thing of that world which they are shortly to enter. The most agreeable view of human society is that of an assemblage of human beings of every age,

sex, and condition, acting in their mutual relations to each other, mingling in serious and sportive occupations, and taking their several parts in the grand drama of life. In such a society it is that minds are formed, that knowledge and manners make their silent progress, and that the *imitative principle* gradually leads on the young to the character and acquirements of maturity. It is an assortment of individuals made by the hand of nature, in which all have duties to perform, pleasures to receive, and improvements to make. Banish a part of what composes *family*, and the whole system is defective. It should comprehend not only the father and mother, the servants, and the child in the cradle, but the rising youth in every successive gradation. From such a complete band, as it were, proceeds the full harmony of the charities of life. The children of middle age look down upon the infants with tender affection, and up to the elder branches with a softened respect; thus fostering emotions which are to make them amiable and estimable in future life. When the well-grown boy employs himself in teaching, conducting, and protecting his younger brothers and sisters, and the womanly girl assists her mother in the cares of the nursery, what a fund of skill and patience are they ac-

quiring for the most important duties of men and women!

It may be made a general remark, that when any one of the divisions of mankind is separated from the rest, and forms a society apart, a generic character is produced by virtue of the imitative principle, widely deviating from that which it would have maintained while mingled with the mass. Thus the monastic societies, male and female, have composed a race of beings, in their manners and sentiments scarcely preserving any similarity with those of the world they have renounced. Those governments which have been desirous of training military men to the highest pitch of ferocity, have been careful to prevent them from mixing in the scenes of civil life. Soldiers long confined to a garrison, and sailors to a ship, are apt totally to forget their relation to the community at large, and to become assimilated to a band of robbers in their den. The Zaporavian Cossacs are so sensible of the effects of this seclusion, that in their community, which is an association for blood and plunder, they admit no women or children. I would not say any thing unnecessarily harsh of institutions among ourselves which many approve; but I might be permitted to ask, what are those boasted virtues of

hardy resolution, unshaken fidelity to their companions, steady combination against authority, and defiance of punishment and censure, which are acquired at our public schools, but qualities resembling those of the detached societies above mentioned, and directly hostile to the principles which produce the welfare of society in general?

With respect to the schools for the other sex, I cannot suppose them nurseries of dispositions like these, nor am I a believer in the stories circulated, chiefly among the licentious, concerning the prevalence of gross violations of decency in them. I am convinced, that in all the reputable seminaries of this class the higher morals are guarded with due vigilance. But I would ask those who are best acquainted with them, whether the society of a number of equals, under rigorous restraint, without the softening of domestic pleasures and parental endearments, do not frequently tend to fret and sour the temper, and give scope to mean and spiteful passions, to envy, detraction, and tale-bearing, which render unlovely the most amiable part of the creation?

What is the result of all these observations? That since the imitative principle has such a powerful operation upon the future character, it is of the highest importance that proper objects should be presented to it during the early years of life—

and that due advantage should be taken of its influence, to inculcate those lessons which by no other means can be so easily and efficaciously impressed upon the youthful mind. *Domestic education* alone affords the opportunity of applying this principle in the fullest and most beneficial manner; and, therefore, in a general view, deserves the preference to other modes.

There are, however, various exceptions to this preference of a home education, which demand attention. The first to be mentioned is a most serious one: it is, that in the present state of manners a child frequently cannot draw his examples from a more improper source than his father's house. And if such an awful consideration be unable to produce a change in the parental economy, doubtless its weight is decisive. Let the child rather be exiled to the remotest parts of the earth than stay to date his ruin from *home*. Nor, when the danger is manifest, would I think of concealing or palliating it by proposing the expedients of separate apartments, a distinct establishment, or other safeguards, which must all prove unavailing where the current of dissolute manners runs strong. One remark, however, I will venture to make. Where the principal hazard is supposed to arise from the idea a child of family and fortune brought up at home will ac-

quire of his own consequence, by means of the deference and submission he will experience from servants and dependants, *that* will not be effectually obviated at a public school. The pretended equality in those schools is rather imaginary than real. There, not less than at home, are parasites and panders, vigilant to flatter his pride and minister to his inclinations. When boys of inferior fortune are sent to public seminaries for the avowed purpose of ingratiating themselves with the sons of persons of rank, can it be supposed that the latter will be left ignorant of their importance, and uncorrupted by its effects? The generosity of spirit usually attributed to youth educated at those schools is, I fear, of no genuine kind; and the mercenary character of the age has in no instance more disgusted me, than in the sentiments I have discovered in some of these tiros, who, in speaking of the reputation and proficiency of some of their fellow-scholars, have dwelt with peculiar complacency on the advantages they were likely to derive from them in the pursuit of pecuniary emolument. Fair fame, literary pleasures, the gratification of parents and friends, were ideas that appeared quite foreign to their conceptions; and gain seemed as much their leading object, as if simple and compound

interest, rather than Cicero and Horace, had been the study of their years.

Another exception to domestic education arises from the necessity of acquiring certain objects of instruction which cannot be attained in the requisite degree at home, even with the assistance of a day-school, which I consider as no deviation from the domestic plan. These objects are chiefly, in the male sex, classical literature in its highest form; in the female, the accomplishments of polite life in an equal style of perfection. Of the existence of this *necessity* no general judgement can be formed. It is an individual question in each particular case, and only to be determined by the views of the parent as to the future destination of the child. Doubtless there are desirable situations in this country which can scarcely be obtained without a high classical reputation, and, it may be added, without those connections, and that habit of pushing and elbowing through a crowd of competitors, which are the usual acquisitions of a public school. If these are to be had *at any rate*, the price must be paid for them; and it may be prudentially right to sacrifice every thing—except (some will say) morals—to such an object. As I am now speaking of the earlier periods of education, it is needless to point out, as

further exceptions, those professional studies which are to be sought in colleges and universities. At the time when they commence, the season approaches in which domestic life must of course be renounced, and new scenes be entered upon. The *imitative principle*, however, ought still to be kept in sight, for its operation is scarcely less powerful than at an earlier age. It now points to *fashion;* and if some seminaries are characterised by the fashion of idleness and dissipation, and others by that of industry and sobriety, a parent who has his son's best interest in view, will not hesitate about the preference. To *imitation*, likewise, may be referred the peculiarities of sect and party which now begin to be strongly marked and permanently fixed; and they who are concerned in supporting such distinctions must take care to place suitable models before the imitative youth.

Of those necessities which oblige females in certain ranks of life to pursue accomplishments by a sacrifice of the qualifications requisite to make them good wives and mothers, I confess myself an inadequate judge; nor shall I venture to say any thing concerning the accomplishments themselves, and the best mode of acquiring them. There is one female accomplishment, however, on which I shall take the liberty to make a few re-

marks, and this is a *talent for conversation.* I believe I shall not err in placing it at the head of all attainments with respect to its attractive powers. Other excellencies inspire occasional admiration, but this rivets the attention. It fascinates even more, at least more generally, than beauty; nor is it fitted for the throng and circle alone, but exerts its influence in the private party, and constitutes the charm of domestic society. That it is so little cultivated among us may seem surprising; but there are no masters to teach it, nor do wealth and rank afford peculiar facilities for acquiring it. In fact, as far as it is a qualification to be learned, and not the gift of nature, next to the essential requisite of a well-furnished mind, the habit of holding free and mixed conversation must be the most efficacious aid. But where is this advantage to be obtained? Certainly not within the walls of a boarding-school, where the trivial chatter of children among one another, only interrupted by the chilling presence of despotic governesses, must exclude every possible attempt at rational and animated converse. Domestic life, when it is what it ought to be, is the only female school for this attainment. Where parents have the ability to lead, and the sense to encourage, proper conversation, and where a due mixture of well-educated visitors of both sexes

and all ages infuses life and variety into the social circle, *there* is the theatre where this delightful accomplishment receives its birth and perfection.

It is unnecessary to specify other exceptions to domestic education, arising from circumstances which depreciate the value of home, though not of an immoral nature; such are vulgarity, ignorance, awkward manners, singularities, and the like. In these cases, it is *not* the object of wise parents to make the children similar to themselves, and therefore the imitative principle must have other models to work after. If these cannot be provided but by means of a school, the expedient must be submitted to as the least evil. It may likewise be proper sometimes to check the force of domestic imitation, even when upon the whole well-directed, by temporary absences and changes of scene, lest so close a family-likeness be caught as to render the young mere copies of the old, and *mannerists* in character. But this may be left to the suggestions of good sense without further remark; and I now close a discussion which the importance of the subject has carried beyond its intended limits.

HISTORICAL RELATIONS OF POISONINGS.

EVERY one who is conversant with history must recollect numerous instances in which the death of eminent persons has been attributed to poison. In some periods, particularly, this notion has been so prevalent, that scarcely one is to be met with in a whole line of sovereigns who has been supposed to have died from the consequences of mere natural disease. Besides this vague supposition, several of the more noted cases of poisoning have been admitted into the number of unquestioned historical facts, although attended with circumstances which a little reflection would show to be highly improbable. I shall not here inquire whether the propensity to this belief be owing to a natural malignity in mankind, a love of wonder and mystery, or any other innate principle; it is sufficient that it is one of the sources of erroneous

opinion, to induce a lover of truth to submit it to impartial discussion.

It appears to me, that in judging of this matter certain rules or canons may be laid down, which might abridge the process of inqury in each particular case, or even supersede such an examination as, from the distance of time, and want of authentic testimony, cannot now be satisfactorily instituted. The first of these that I shall propose is the following: Great crimes are to be regarded as among the rarer occurrences of human life; whenever, therefore, an event can with probability be accounted for without their aid, it is unphilosophical to suppose their existence.

I know not how far this proposition will be generally allowed; but for my own part, being convinced that there is more good, both moral and physical, than evil in the world, and that even in bad characters crimes abhorrent to human nature are not committed without a degree of repugnance, I cannot give an easy credit to such an imputation as that of poisoning, unless I perceive a very powerful motive inciting to the deed. Even adepts in villainy have held the maxim that crime is too precious a thing to be lavished, and have therefore reserved it for important occasions. In fact, they have been desirous of doing without it, if possible; both to save themselves the secret pain

of guilt, which the most hardened can seldom entirely subdue, and to escape the odium and danger of a detection. Certain characters in history are so blackened with infamy that every charge against them is apt to appear probable, and examination is thought superfluous. But many of those persons were as prudent as they were wicked; and the actions of a Tiberius or a Borgia require adequate motives, as much as those of the most virtuous of mankind. In several of these cases of imputed poison, a known constitutional disease, or old age, would soon innocently have effected all that crime could propose to do. When almost the whole royal family of France was swept away in the latter years of Louis XIV., men of understanding saw the cause in the enfeebled progeny of luxury, rather than in the chemical laboratory of Philip of Orleans.

Another canon is, that the supposition of poison is not to be adopted in order to account for deaths, the circumstances of which are totally different from the known effects of poisonous substances.

In common opinion, poison, like magic or any other mysterious power, is conceived capable of acting in any mode required. It can kill instantly, or at ten years distance—by the ordinary vehicle of food and drink, or by the extraordinary conveyance of perfumes, vapours, and topical applications

—with known and customary symptoms, or with such as are new and unaccountable. But no physician or naturalist can admit such gratuitous assumptions. He will, in the first place, remark that all the poisonous substances which modern researches (so much more accurate than ancient) have detected, are referable to certain classes, distinguished by precise and definite modes of action. Thus, the corrosive, the drastic, the narcotic poisons, in all their various degrees of strength, are as well known by their sensible operation, as the classes of medicines with which they are connected, and in which, indeed, they are for the most part comprehended. I do not mean to assert that it is impossible there should be in nature deleterious substances whose effects are not reducible to the above-mentioned classes; but I would maintain it to be highly improbable that any such, in those parts of the world which have been the chief theatres of historical events, should have escaped the inquiries of naturalists and chemists. Further, it will appear that some of the imputed consequences of poison are absolutely irreconcileable to the laws of the animal economy. Thus, though it be possible that a noxious substance received into the stomach shall not only excite immediate disturbances, but shall lastingly injure the constitution; yet that, con-

formably to some stories, it should lodge weeks and months in the intestinal canal perfectly harmless, and reserve all its mischievous effects to some remote period, precisely determined by the giver, is, I conceive, an impossibility. Again—that any poison can be so volatilized and concentrated as to kill by the odour communicated to a letter or a pair of gloves—or that any exists sufficiently strong and penetrable to prove mortal by infecting the caul of a wig, or by fruit touched by an envenomed knife—will scarcely be credited by a reflecting mind ; for although the miasms of certain diseases are destructive in forms as subtle as these, it is inconceivable that any human beings could prepare a venom so exquisite without being themselves destroyed by it.

A very suspicious circumstance with respect to many stories of poisoning is the alleged efficacy of counterpoisons. The doctrine relative to these substances—that a previous use of them will fortify the body against the operation of any poisons that may be afterwards administered—is contrary to every fact respecting such things as we know to be really poisonous. One of the most famous compositions of the antidote class, that contrived for Mithridates by his physician Archigenes, has come down to our times ; and it is certain that a person might take large doses of it daily for his whole life

without being secured from the baneful effects of any poison, except, perhaps, opium, which is contained in the composition itself.

A number of the antidotes in highest repute have been the most inert substances in nature, chosen from their rarity alone, or from some fanciful and superstitious notion connected with them, and such as could have no possible efficacy in rendering a deleterious drug harmless. Indeed, the whole *antidotary*, which was formerly a copious division in books of materia medica, is expunged from modern works of that class.

When, therefore, of two persons supposed to have taken poison, one is alleged to have escaped by means of a counterpoison, we may pretty safely conclude that neither of them was in reality in danger from that cause.

Poisoning and magical arts are common combinations in criminal charges. Indeed, the term *veneficium* in Latin signifies equally poisoning and sorcery. We know the latter to have been a fictitious crime, the creation of superstition and credulity; and it is highly probable that in those instances the poisoning was in like manner a false imputation, the forgery of malignity and calumny. It is true, the charge of sorcery or witchcraft has sometimes been well-founded; that is, practices of that kind have really been employed, in the

belief that they would produce the mischiefs intended; and persons capable of such criminality would probably feel no repugnance at any other nefarious practices; but, on the other hand, if they confided in their magical rites, they would think an additional mode of effecting their wicked purposes superfluous.

As another rule in judging of stories of poisoning, it might, perhaps, be required in support of them to show by what means the poison could be administered; or, at least, to answer the objection often arising from the apparent difficulty of such administration. Kings and princes are usually surrounded with officers in such a situation of responsibility, or so much attached to their persons by interest, that it would be no easy matter either to engage them to concur in such a design, or for any one of them to execute it without the hazard of immediate detection. Voltaire may perhaps be thought to have displayed an outrageous degree of scepticism in questioning the offer made by the physician of king Pyrrhus to the Roman consuls, of poisoning his master, on the ground that the confidential medical attendant upon an opulent monarch could not expect a reward from the magistrates of a poor republic, adequate to the risk and certain loss he would incur by the attempt: I have no doubt, however, that physicians

have often been falsely accused of this crime. They have, indeed, the easiest opportunities of administering a fatal dose ; but they are the most closely watched ; and in arbitrary courts it is a service of danger enough to give even an approved medicine of powerful operation.

It is very seldom that in historical relations of poisonings proof has been given of the fact from examination of the dead body. Appearances, indeed, are often mentioned as denoting poison, but these are sometimes of so marvellous a kind as to throw doubt upon the whole story : such is that of the heart remaining entire on the funeral pyre when the rest of the body was consumed. In fact, there is no change in the dead body induced by poison which is not also a consequence of natural disease, except large and recent erosions of the stomach and bowels ; yet many positive judgements have been hazarded where this circumstance was wanting, and where nothing was seen but what was entirely equivocal. The detection of the remains of some poisonous substance in the intestinal canal is a demonstrative proof of the fact, which seems scarcely ever to have been attempted in cases recorded by historians.

If the preceding rules and observations are well founded, we shall be warranted in regarding with doubt, and admitting with caution, many of the

most remarkable instances in which the death of eminent persons has been attributed to poison, especially where strong prejudices have prevailed against the supposed perpetrators, and the crime has been imputed as a thing of course, without any evidence of fact. The narrations may justly be more suspected when they relate to an ignorant and superstitious age or country, which have always most abounded in tales of wonder of every kind.

I am very far from supposing that human wickedness has not often, both in public and private life, employed this instrument in effecting its detestable purposes; but something is gained to the cause of benevolence whenever we are able to exonerate our fellow-creatures from any odious charge; and historical truth is at all events an interesting object of inquiry. I shall now proceed to apply the principles I have attempted to establish, in an examination of some noted instances in which credit has been given to the imputation of poisoning.

Germanicus Cæsar, the nephew and adopted son of the emperor Tiberius, is by some writers positively asserted to have been poisoned by Piso, prefect of Syria, at the instigation of Tiberius. Suetonius and Tacitus relate the circumstances of his death, and both mention the suspicion of poi-

son, the former seeming to give credit to it, the latter not. From their accounts, particularly that of Tacitus, which is the fullest, it appears, that Germanicus, being sent by his uncle to command in the east, was followed by Piso, a man of a violent temper, and hostile to the young prince; and there is good reason to suppose that Tiberius, in conformity with the maxims of his dark and crafty policy, had purposely chosen a person of that character to check and control his too popular nephew. Germanicus, after visiting various countries, returning from Egypt to Antioch, fell sick there, and lingering some time between apparent amendment and relapse, at length died. As he was the great favorite of the Roman people, his death excited universal commiseration, which his friends took every means to augment; and suspicions of foul practices were soon raised against Piso, which were at length brought to judicial examination before the senate. The emperor seems to have acted with great fairness and propriety on the occasion, suffering the accusation to take its free course, yet endeavouring to moderate the violence and prejudice of the public mind. The charges against Piso were various; but that respecting the poison was supported by the following evidence alone. The act was asserted to have been committed at a banquet, given by Germanicus him-

self, in which Piso sat next to him, who was imagined to have poisoned his food by touching it with infected hands—a supposition than which one more improbable and even absurd has scarcely ever been made in a similar case! The dead body, when exposed on the forum of Antioch, is said by Suetonius to have exhibited livid spots, with foam at the mouth; and a very extraordinary circumstance is related, namely, that the heart remained unconsumed on the funeral pyre; a fact which the philosophy of the day regarded as decisive of poison; though, indeed, Pliny asserts it also to occur in those who died of the *morbus cardiacus*. It is further asserted, that a famous female poisoner, an intimate of Plancina, the wife of Piso, on being sent for from the province to Rome, died suddenly at Brundusium, and that poison was found tied up in a knot of her hair. As no signs of violent death were discovered in her body, it seems to have been imagined that the power of the poison penetrated through her skull into her brain. Such weak and ridiculous arguments are surely more calculated to excite disbelief than conviction.

One thing which appeared on the trial, though a proof of the bad intentions of the enemies of Germanicus, yet, according to my principles, is rather an argument against the poisoning. This

was, that about the house in which he lodged, certain leaden images, relics of human bodies, and verses of incantation were found, by which his foes evidently hoped to render his disease mortal. If they were conscious of having administered poison, these magical practices might have been spared.

On the whole, though Piso, despairing to survive the popular odium against him, and probably conscious of unwarrantable conduct towards the prince, put an end to his own life in prison, yet it appears to me almost certain, that the death of Germanicus was owing to natural disease, aggravated, perhaps, by alarm and vexation; and in no respect to poison.

One of the most famous stories in the annals of poisoning is that of Pope Alexander VI. and his son Cæsar Borgia, of whom the first is said to have been killed, and the second thrown into a dangerous illness, by poison taken through mistake, which they had themselves prepared for others. The characters of these monsters in the human shape will certainly render credible any *useful* crime which comes within the compass of the most consummate villainy; but at the same time, this just prejudice against them may easily become a cause of error in particular cases. The story is related with great diversity of circum-

stance by different authors; but taking that given by Tomasi, in his life of Cæsar Borgia, as apparently the most accurate, we shall probably find reason to doubt whether poison had any concern in the event. The simple narrative of what is known to have happened is the following.

Pope Alexander having made a promotion of nine new cardinals, invited them and some of the old ones to an entertainment given at the villa of a cardinal near the Vatican. He and his son went to the place about the cool of the evening. It was the 2d of August, and the weather extremely hot. The pope called for a draught of wine to quench his thirst, and his son followed his example. The guests arriving soon after, they sat down to supper; when the pope was suddenly taken ill, fainted away, and was carried out senseless. His son was presently seized in the same manner, and was also carried home. The pope recovered his senses after a time, but fell into a violent fever. He was blooded, and other medicines were employed; but his strength gradually failing, he died on the eighth day[a]. His son had a long and severe illness, but at

[a] The pope's chamberlain, Burchard, says, that he was attacked by a fever on the 12th, was let blood on the 16th, when the disorder appeared to become a tertian, and that he died on the 18th. The difference of date is probably owing to a different reckoning of style.

length, through the strength of his constitution, recovered. So far we are guided by acknowledged fact. The secret part of the story relates, that some bottles of wine, drugged with a white powder like sugar, the usual poison employed by these miscreants, were sent from the pope's cellar to the villa, with private orders to the butler to serve it to such of the guests alone as should be pointed out to him. The head butler being by chance absent when Alexander called for wine before supper, the under-butler, knowing nothing of the contrivance, or thinking this marked wine the most precious, served it to the pope and his son. These circumstances are neither in themselves very probable, nor does it appear how, if true, they should come to be publicly known. It is not likely that a man so politic as pope Alexander should, at the time he had formed great projects, for the execution of which it was necessary to gain as many friends as possible, commit a crime which could not fail to be strongly suspected, and to raise the utmost odium against him. That fancy and fiction were busy on the occasion, appears from a marvellous tale related by Tomasi, that the pope, who had constantly borne about him the holy sacrament in a gold box (an astrologer having told him that it would

preserve his life from all dangers), discovered on coming to the villa that he had left it at home, and sent in all haste for it, but had swallowed the fatal draught before the messenger returned. This messenger, too, who was a cardinal, is said to have seen in his holiness's chamber a vision, representing a dead pope extended on a catafalc. Every judicious inquirer knows how much a mixture of incredible matter tends to discredit the other circumstances of a narration. But in my opinion the strongest ground of unbelief in this story is, that the death may be accounted for another way, and that the incidents of the disease do not correspond with the supposition of poison. In the unwholesome climate of Rome, the sudden cooling of the body at the close of a hot day by a large draught of cold liquor, is surely a very probable cause of an acute disease; and it appears, both from the express words of the writer, and from the treatment, that this disease was fever. The supposed poison, resembling sugar, was doubtless a preparation of arsenic; but its effects are not to excite fever, nor would bleeding be thought of as a remedy. If it were possible that any death of Alexander VI. should *not* be attributed to poison, the circumstances of this would seem as little suspicious as any mode in

which he could die. It is true, the concomitant illness of his son renders the fact more singular; but as the same natural cause operated on both, it is reasonable to suppose that the effects would be similar [a].

[a] P. S. Since this paper was written, I find from Mr. Roscoe's *Life of Pope Leo X.*, that Muratori has produced many authorities to refute the notion that Alexander VI. died of poison. The note from Burchard is transcribed from that valuable work.

A WORD FOR PHILOSOPHY.

UNFORTUNATE Philosophy! not only to have retained the enmity of all her old foes, the tyrants and deceivers of mankind; but to have incurred the reproaches of many who in better days were well pleased to be regarded as her friends and coadjutors! Perhaps, however, the prejudice conceived against her is beginning to subside; at least, an inquiry how far the imputations under which she has labored have been merited, may at this time hope for a patient hearing.

Philosophy has been accused of contributing to the subversion of every thing sacred and venerable among men, of vilifying authority, insulting dignities, unsettling established customs and opinions, and substituting her own crudities and fallacies to the results of long experience. I have no doubt that her real influence has been greatly exaggerated, and that the bad passions of mankind have been the true causes of the deplo-

rable evils which the world has lately witnessed: but admitting that Philosophy has had her share in the work of destruction, let us calmly consider what were the things against which her batteries were erected.

Politics and religion, the two master-springs of human affairs, have both been touched by Philosophy, and, it must be acknowledged, with a free hand. She has been guilty, too, of what many seem to regard as an unpardonable offence—resorting to *first principles* in order to justify her attacks upon existing systems, and lay a foundation for proposed improvements. Thus, in the science of politics (to begin with that department) she has boldly assumed that men come into the world with *rights*—that the maintenance of these rights ought to be the great object of social institutions—that government was intended for the good of the whole, not the emolument of the few—that legitimate authority can have no other basis than general consent, for that force can never constitute right—that civil distinctions, originating from the agreement of society, always remain within the determination of society—and that laws, in order to be just, must bear equally upon all.

These principles have doubtless borne a hostile aspect towards the greater part of existing

governments, which have supported themselves upon maxims so much the reverse; but has Philosophy urged the demolition of all such governments? Certainly not, unless she is identified with Fanaticism. It has been her invariable method first to recommend to the usurpers of undue authority to repair their wrongs by gradual concessions; and secondly, to the sufferers under tyranny, to state their grievances in a quiet way, and patiently, though firmly, to expect redress. This she has done as the decided friend of *peace;* for Philosophy (and Philosophy alone) has been incessantly employed in lifting up her voice against *war*, that monstrous aggregate of all the evils, natural and moral, that conspire against human happiness. The works of all the writers, ancient and modern, who have merited the title of philosophers, may be confidently appealed to for their strenuous endeavours to correct the false opinions of men with respect to the glory of warriors and conquerors, and to inculcate the superior claims to admiration and gratitude arising from the successful culture of the beneficent arts.

Had, then, the dictates of Philosophy been equally listened to by the governors and governed, reforms might have been effected by mutual agreement to the advantage of both, and a progress have been made towards that *melioration* of

the state of mankind, which a philanthropist can never cease to have in view amidst all his disappointments. That such expectations have failed through the predominance of the selfish principle, combined with the impetuous and ungovernable character of a particular nation, is not the fault of Philosophy. She held up a torch to point out the safest path to a necessary reformation, but incendiaries snatched it from her for the purposes of mischief. It is acknowledged that some of the evil proceeded from the fanaticism of her honest but deluded votaries; but much more from those who disclaimed all connection with her. The most sanguinary tyrant of the French revolution was notoriously the foe to all mental cultivation, and obliterated the precepts of philosophy in the blood of its professors. And no one can suspect the man who now aims at uniting all Europe in the fetters of a military despotism, of an inclination to promote liberal discussions on the rights of man and the foundation of government. In point of fact, it appears that the sole European power that steadily resists the present tendency to an universal barbarism of civil polity, is that which is most enlightened by free investigation, and in which alone Philosophy at this time possesses a pen and a tongue [a].

[a] This is said not with regard to all the acts of its occasional ad-

With respect, therefore, to the political system of the world, Philosophy (I mean of that kind which was chiefly prevalent in the latter half of the eighteenth century) may stand acquitted of any thing inimical to the true interests of mankind; and whatever improvements took place in the administration of the continental governments of Europe during that period may fairly be ascribed to her influence. She promoted the enfranchisement of slaves and vassals, the relief of the lower orders from arbitrary and burthensome requisitions, the liberation of internal commerce from impolitic restrictions, the encouragement of every species of useful industry, the melioration of laws, the abolition of cruel punishments and of judicial torture, and, above all, religious toleration—which leads me to the second point, namely, the conduct of Philosophy with respect to religion.

Here, again, it is proper to begin with inquiring what it was that Philosophy actually opposed under the appellation of religion; for nothing can be more unfair than to draw a picture of religion as it has existed only in a comparatively few *philosophical* minds, and then to display it as the object against which Philosophy has aimed

ministrations, but to that *public voice* which, through the medium of a free press, pronounces upon the principles and conduct, as well of its own government, as of those of other nations.

her shafts. A system of faith, the sole essentials of which should be a belief in the existence of a Supreme Being of infinite perfections, the moral governor and judge of mankind, and of a future state of rewards and punishments, would, I am persuaded, command the respect of every genuine philanthropist, who would rejoice in such a powerful support to morality, and such a consolation under the unavoidable evils of life, and prize it the more for the sanction of revelation. But where has national religion appeared under this simple aspect? Certainly not in those countries in which philosophers have been its adversaries.

There cannot be a more copious source of error than to confound under a common name, on account of an agreement in certain particulars, things in their nature essentially different. To instance in the different sects which bear the general title of christian—though all referring to the same primary authority, it is scarcely possible to conceive of greater variations than subsist among them, both with relation to each other, and to the doctrines of their common founder. Accuracy, therefore, requires that in speaking of them they should be specifically denominated, and not be grouped under a generical appellative. Thus it is right to say, *the religion of Rome, the religion of Luther, the religion of Cal-*

vin, and the like; for *the religion of Christ*, will convey but a very inadequate idea of their several characters and tenets. Let us then see what that *Roman religion* was which peculiarly excited the enmity of what is called the French school of philosophy.

It was a system which, in the first place, demanded the renunciation of all right of private judgement, and subjected the religious opinions and practices of all the world to the determination of a foreign priest—which took from men the direction of their own consciences, and put it into the hands of a *cast*, detached in all countries from their fellow-subjects, and universally connected by peculiar claims and interests—which uniformly discouraged all inquiries and discussions tending, however remotely, to invalidate its own authority, and exacted implicit submission in all points on which it had thought fit to decide —which taught doctrines the most irreconcileable to reason and common sense, and enjoined observances the most trifling, degrading, and burthensome. It was a system, moreover, radically hostile to every other, spurning all community or accommodation, annexing extravagant ideas of merit to proselytism, and therefore, when allied to power, infallibly leading to persecution: a system, the influence of which was traced in

lines of blood through every page of modern history. Was it then no just object to the friends of reason and humanity to loosen the hold of such a religion upon the minds of men? Was it not a necessary preliminary to every attempt for introducing substantial improvements in the countries where it prevailed; and if, in the contest with a mass of opinion so powerfully supported, some things were necessarily endangered which were worth preserving, was not the prize adequate to the hazard?

A consistent protestant cannot, certainly, dispute these conclusions; but he may blame philosophers for not fairly examining christianity at the source, and adopting it in such a form as shall approve itself to a rational inquirer. Before he does this, however, he must be prepared to admit that an inquiry conducted upon such a principle justifies itself, whatever be the system in which it settles. He must renounce all anathematizing denunciations; disclaim any preference due to a particular system because it is that of the state; and disavow any right of annexing penalties and privations to non-conformity to a predominant faith. Unless he agrees to these preliminaries, he is in effect no more a friend to free inquiry than the Romanist; and when he urges examination, it is only upon the tacit con-

dition that its result should be conversion to his own opinions. The philosopher who has thrown off the authority of a pope and council is not likely to yield to that of Luther or Calvin, a convocation or a synod.

To conclude—Philosophy, understood in its proper sense of "the love of wisdom," or of truth (which is the same thing), is the only principle to be relied on, not only for meliorating the state of the world, but for preventing a relapse to barbarism. If *she* be excluded from all guidance of human affairs, in whose hands shall it be placed? —in those of Avarice, of Ambition, of Bigotry? She may have had her moments of delirium, but she is essentially the votary of Reason, and possesses within herself the power of correcting her own errors. Policy, if *she* be not called in as a counsellor, degenerates into craft; and Religion, without her direction, into superstition. They who are afraid of her searching spirit, must be conscious of something that will not bear the light of investigation. They are foes to the truth because "the truth is not in them."

ON CANT.

Canto quæ solitus. VIRG.

THE motto prefixed may serve as a kind of definition of my subject; for *cant* is, in reality, an *accustomed formula* of words employed on certain occasions—the *chant* or cry adopted by parties, sects or professions, repeated from habit or imitation, without any other design in the speaker than that of saying what has been usual in similar circumstances. The beggar in the street who addresses passengers with "Heaven bless your honour! Health and prosperity to you," &c. cannot be supposed to take any real interest in the welfare of those on whom he bestows his benedictions: he only uses the cant of his trade, and does not expect that it should be taken for more than it is worth. The same is the case with other canters. They employ habitual forms of speech, through a sort of *bienséance*, or regard to decorum, which the inexperienced may, indeed, if they please,

take for earnest, but which no one conversant with the world considers as such.

Cant, therefore, is different from hypocrisy, though, perhaps, originating from it, and though hypocrisy generally implies a cant. In the use of cant there is, doubtless, somewhat of an intention to appear in a favorable light to those to whom it is addressed; but this scarcely amounts to a serious purpose of deception, and in some instances is totally free from it. Thus, when in the cant of politeness a man calls himself the devoted humble servant of another, he has no idea of being understood according to the literal sense of these words; he only wishes to be regarded as a well-bred man. Real hypocrisy seldom confines itself to cant. On the contrary, an artful hypocrite will studiously avoid that phraseology which common use has rendered unmeaning, and will perhaps seek for credit by affecting a blunt disregard of the ordinary forms of civility.

The variety of cants is as great as that of the different conditions and callings of men. Some, however, stand pre-eminent on account of the frequency and solemnity with which they are brought before the public. A brief notice of these, with their several characteristics, will form the subject of the present paper.

Political cant is one of the most noted and pro-

minent species; and notwithstanding the daily proofs of its inanity, it still exerts no small influence over the minds of the credulous and ignorant. Each party in a state has its own appropriate cant; and states employ a cant in their transactions with each other, which is regarded as common property. The public good is a commonplace equally belonging to all these cants, though variously modified according to circumstances and situations. The monarch laments the necessity of laying additional burdens upon his dear subjects, but the public good imperiously demands such sacrifices, which, however, he hopes, will not be of long duration: in the mean time he is resolved in his own mind not to abandon any scheme of ambition or cupidity in which he is engaged, whatever his dear subjects may suffer. These patriotic sentiments are re-echoed in addresses from the people, expressive of the highest confidence in the wisdom and benevolence of the royal breast, though perhaps at the same time associations are forming for effecting a compulsory change of measures. In these cases the language on each side passes with the experienced only as words of course, and no surprise is excited on finding not the least correspondence in actions.

The cant of party delights to dwell on general terms. Thus the watch-word with one is the *con-*

stitution, with the other *reform*, each knowing that by interpretation any thing or nothing can be made of either of these words. A very common cant of the party in power is to express a confident hope of unanimity, although they may be conscious that they have acquired their stations by fomenting as much as possible the spirit of division. A general election is the period at which, in this country, cant is most triumphant, filling the columns of every newspaper, and the walls of every empty house. Its basis is the shibboleth of each party, combined with the personal protestations of the individual candidate. Thus, one in great letters parades his *independence*; another, his attachment to *king and constitution*; a third, his zeal for the *protestant religion*; while all agree in proffering the most active and disinterested services to their worthy constituents. In many of these cases, the mockery of profession is so gross, that one might suppose the writers had adopted the line of Horace,

Virginibus puerisque canto.

But the most dignified display of political cant is in the manifestos and memorials issued from belligerent courts. The most comprehensive philanthopy, the strictest adherence to good faith and the principles of public justice, and the most lauda-

ble spirit of moderation are assumed by all in turn, who avow no other wish than to stop the effusion of blood and restore the blessings of peace to mankind. The late Catharine of Russia was the most conspicuous canter of her time, and was distinguished for the benevolence of her sentiments, and her frequent pious appeals to heaven for the sincerity of her declarations. At present the emperor Napoleon seems to have taken her place, who, good man! would live in perfect peace and quiet, had he not the misfortune of being surrounded with quarrelsome neighbours. It must, however, be acknowledged, that he is not the only imperial or royal proficient in this way.

A particular species of the cant of sovereigns is that of prefacing all their severe and tyrannical acts with self-applied epithets of justice and humanity. Thus, when the patriot Patkul was so cruelly sacrificed to the vengeance of Charles XII. of Sweden, an officer read the sentence in the following terms: "It is hereby made known to be the express order of his majesty, our *most merciful* sovereign, that this man, who is a traitor to his country, be broken upon the wheel and quartered, &c." "What mercy!" exclaimed the poor criminal. In like manner, those theologians who maintain that the great majority of mankind were created for the deliberate purpose of being consigned to

everlasting torments, usually couple their horrid doctrine with solemn assertions of the infinite goodness of the Creator. The humane court of Inquisition is remarkable for a cant of this kind, and it never submits a culprit to the torture without expressing the tenderest concern for his temporal and eternalwelfare.

The *cant of religion* has, if possible, played a greater part on the theatre of the world than that of politics; indeed, with a large proportion of mankind, religion has always been nothing more than a cant. This may be safely predicated of all those who, while they have it continually in their mouths, are never swayed by its precepts in any action of their lives in which their worldly interest is concerned. No sect has a right to reproach another on this head: they are all

Et cantare pares, et respondere parati.

If powerful establishments seem on one hand to have less motive for canting than their weaker rivals, as being less dependent on public opinion; on the other, the consciousness of exciting envy by their opulence and high pretensions operates to inspire them with the cant of humility and moderation. The haughtiest priest that the world ever saw assumed the title of "the servant of the ser-

vants of God," at a time when he expected that kings and emperors should kiss his toe and hold his stirrup. In countries where the civil authority has so far prevailed over the ecclesiastical as to enforce a political toleration of different religions, it is curious to remark how the predominant sect has accommodated a cant to its situation. "God forbid that they should think of forcing men's consciences, or denying to any of their brethren the right of private judgment!" All who dissent from them are, to be sure, in the wrong, and their blindness and perversity are to be lamented; but they disclaim all methods of bringing back the stray sheep into the fold, except those of lenity and persuasion. Meantime they do not hesitate to hold up the separatists to the hatred and reproach of their fellow-subjects as guilty of the heinous sin of schism; and they strenuously support every unjust and impolitic restriction which ancient prejudice has imposed upon them. Such a church boasts of being *tolerant*, that is, of *enduring* what it cannot prevent. It may surely be affirmed that toleration in this sense is a mere cant word.

Religious cant displays itself in nothing more than in the practice of calling in Providence on all occasions. I am sufficiently aware that a real belief of providential interferences in cases of im-

portance has pervaded all faiths, nor do I mean to censure the pious application of it, whatever may be my opinion of the justness of such application. But when Te Deum is ordered to be sung by both parties after a dubious battle, manifestly for the purpose of raising the spirits of a desponding people; or when the most trivial incidents are construed into proofs of the divine favor by an itinerant fanatic; who does not recognise the cant of hypocrisy? In the time of Cromwell, when the *language* of piety was that of every department in the state, we may be well assured that in many cases it was nothing more than a cant. No where did it prevail more than in the army. A commander, who from good intelligence had marched a troop of horse to surprise the enemy's quarters, in his dispatches pretended to have had an answer to his prayers instigating him to the attempt. A council of war always began business with seeking the Lord for direction, while the general had in his pocket the plan of operations which he had concerted with his confidential officers. The Scotch preachers who compelled old Leven to quit his strong post at Dunbar in the confidence of a victory promised to their prayers, were honest enthusiasts; but Cromwell, when he exclaimed, at the enemy's approach, "The Lord has deliver-

ed them into our hands," well knew that he had long been employing all his artifice to bring them to this resolution.

Moral cant, at least till lately, was become more fashionable in this country than religious cant; and to this head I fear must be referred much of the pure and refined sentiment with which the public are treated on various occasions. Thus, the solemn and pathetic lectures on morality which are delivered at the bar in trials for crim. con., or for other flagrant violations of the laws of virtue, can scarcely avoid this designation, when it is known that a prior fee would have secured all the speaker's eloquence to the opposite party. I dare not affirm that the zeal manifested in the senate against corruption and public abuses is a cant; although, when we find the same orators when in place entirely forgetting their former language, and defending the very enormities against which they had so loudly declaimed, we must conclude either that some extraordinary process of conviction has suddenly taken place in their minds, or that they were merely before reciting a part in the drama of opposition. The *cant of sentimentality*, which is a kind of sickly and overstrained morality, may be mentioned under this head. Its most copious source is in plays and novels. Sterne was one of those who dealt most largely in this

commodity and brought it into fashion. He had a crowd of imitators, who, as usual, exaggerated their original, and carried the affectation of fine feeling to the borders of burlesque. On the stage the comedies termed sentimental gave the tone, which is still followed by our modern dramatists, but with the addition of caricature, and a most unnatural combination of qualities, so that nothing is now more common among the dramatis personæ than generous sharpers and benevolent banditti. The public kindly applauds all the cant put into the mouths of these worthies, while the authors laugh and fill their pockets.

Of other cants, that of *authorship* is not one of the least conspicuous. A versifier, who with infinite pains has strung together a parcel of rhymes, which, after every preliminary of oblique puffing, he gives to the public, affects to regard his performances as mere trifles, composed for his private amusement, and without the most distant view to fame. "Nos hæc novimus esse nihil." "His indulgent friends have been pleased to think them worthy of the light, otherwise he should have condemned them to merited obscurity. Some pieces, indeed, had already got into print without his knowledge, and his principal object is, to give in a more correct form what he could not recall."

Even Pope was not above this kind of cant.

Though more a poet by profession than most of the versifying tribe, one of his favorite topics in his letters, as Dr. Johnson observes, is an affected disparagement of his own poetry. He writes, he says, "when he has just nothing else to do." He constantly pretends the utmost insensibility to censure and criticism, and yet composed the Dunciad. The same indifference is affected at the present day by many, who are in agonies on opening a review. As to the cant of pretending to write for the public good, since it has been assumed by every compiler who works by the sheet with the aid of paste and scissars, creditable authors have scarcely ventured to use it.

Criticism itself has its cant, of which one of the most provoking instances to a poor condemned author is the affected exclamation of hardship and misery on the part of the critic, in being obliged to drudge through the wretched stuff that every month obtrudes upon the public, though without such stuff our periodical censors would not have an existence. The royal pronoun *we*, the fiction of a board of greybeards sitting in solemn judgment round a table, and the assumed dignity of an office, frequently the self-creation of conceit and inexperience, are other examples of the cant belonging to the critical trade.

There is no species of cant so strongly marked

by a jargon of peculiar phraseology as that of connoisseurship in the fine arts. The connoisseur's vocabulary is besprinkled with a number of indefinite and metaphorical terms, which convey no precise ideas to proficients themselves, who are found widely to differ in their application of them to different performances. Their chief purpose seems to be to furnish with a set of knowing phrases those who think themselves obliged to talk about a thing, whether they have any clear conceptions of it or not.

I shall not lengthen this paper by enumerating the several kinds of professional cant, of which the essence is a speciousness and pretence originally adopted for the purpose of deception, but continued through habit and established form, like the lawyer's wig and the clergyman's cassock. This may have its use in the common intercourse of society, yet it will always be disdained by commanding talents and high-spirited integrity.

ON MOTTOES.

THE application of passages from eminent authors, by way of authority, illustration, or ornament, has been a very ancient practice, and in modern times has become a custom which, like all prevalent customs, has often deviated into excess. At the revival of literature, when it was the chief object with men of letters to display the extent of their reading, scarcely any work appeared without a multiplicity of decoration of this kind. Not a pamphlet was published without its mottoes in Greek and Latin, and not a sentiment, however trivial, was hazarded without confirmation by parallel sentences from the ancients. The pedantry of this practice at length became an object of ridicule. It is certain, however, that the moderate use of quotation, when directed by judgement and taste, has been at all times agreeable to cultivated readers, who have received from it the double pleasure of unexpectedly meeting with passages

which they have admired in their proper places, and of seeing them happily introduced in new connexions.

It is not my intention in the present paper to speak generally of quotations, but only of that species of them which are peculiarly called mottoes. These are short sentences, either prefixed to books, or inscribed on portraits, coats of arms, edifices, devices, and the like, which serve as heads or titles indicating the essential character, object or design. The French have a happy term to express the motto to a device or emblem; they call it *l'ame*, the *soul*. In fact, a well chosen motto contains the spirit or essence of the thing to which it is applied.

There are two different modes of application of these quoted passages, which divide them into two distinct classes. In the first the author's words are taken in their proper sense; in the second, they are allusively employed, and transferred to a different meaning. Of the first, the excellence consists in the nervous and pointed expression of the thought which it is intended to enforce: the beauty of the second depends upon starting some unexpected but exact resemblance, which surprises by the ingenuity of the application. Examples shall be given to illustrate this distinction, which, it is hoped, may afford some

entertainment to the classical reader, whatever be thought of the introductory matter. Those of the first class will take the lead.

A variety of mottoes have been inscribed on clocks and sun-dials, with the intention of warning the spectator of the unheeded lapse of time. I recollect none superior in energy to the two following, afforded by Seneca's Epistles. "Inscii rapimur." "Nisi properamus, relinquimur." The English language is so inferior in conciseness to the Latin, that no adequate version can be given; but we might say, "Time whirls us on unfelt." "Haste, or you stay behind."

The same author gives in three words what would serve for a striking sentence on a tombstone; "Abstulit, sed dedit:" the words are similar to those of Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away," which is simply pious resignation; but Seneca, who applies them to Fortune, has a different meaning; "She has taken away, but she first gave"—and the lesson is, "Remember that you have enjoyed what you now lament to have lost." By the substitution of Deity to Fortune, it would become pious as well as philosophical.

What Seneca says of certain frivolous and useless modes of sophistical reasoning in his time, would not unaptly apply to the modern subtleties

of metaphysicians: "Nec ignoranti nocent, nec scientem juvant:" "Ignorance of them does no harm, and knowledge no good:" which is not quite so satirical as a line on logicians, quoted by Guy Patin,

Gens ratione furens, et mentem pasta chimæris.

A political writer meaning to reproach a nation for its readiness to plunge into war upon any view of profit, might adopt this sentence from Livy: "Maxime omnium belli avida, modo præda aut merces esset." On the other hand, he might apply to an unfeeling despot, who had involved his country in a war destructive to himself and his subjects, these lines from Statius:

Tu merito: ast horum miseret, quos sanguine viles
Conjugibus natisque infanda ad prælia raptos
Projicis excidio, bone rex!

Unpitied thou! but these deserve a tear,
Who, with their wives and babes, a race despised,
By thee are thrust to slaughter—best of kings!

An incapable minister, whose presumption has led him to assume the direction of the state in a time of danger, which is tenfold augmented by his own rashness and ignorance, could not be more forcibly imaged than in the following simile applied by Silius Italicus to the consul Flaminius in the second Punic war:

Ut pelagi rudis, et pontem tractare per artem
Nescius, accepit miseræ si jura carinæ
Ventorum tenet ipse vicem, cunctisque procellis
Dat jactare ratem; fertur vaga gurgite puppis,
Ipsius in scopulos dextra impellente magistri.

As he who takes a hapless vessel's helm,
New to the sea, nor taught the pilot's art,
Does the storm's office, gives the bark a sport
To every adverse gale; wide o'er the main
She flies, his own rash hand amid the rocks
Steering her fatal course.

It would be an elegant compliment to apply to a master of one of our great schools the lines which Statius in his Sylvæ addresses to a person of the same profession.

Et nunc ex illo forsan grege gentibus alter
Jura dat Eois, alter compescit Iberos;
Hi dites Asiæ populos, hi Pontica frænant,
Hi fora pacificis emendant fascibus, illi
Castra pia statione tenent: tu laudis origo.

And now, perchance, amid the studious flock,
One to the East gives law, one rules the West;
These the rich Asian tribes, the Pontic these
O'erawe; in peaceful courts their wholesome sway
These exercise, while those in watchful camps
Their sacred country guard—thine all their praise!

These examples, which, perhaps, will have the merit of novelty to most readers, may suffice for the first class of mottoes. Of the second, the following instances may be given:

There is not, I think, in all Shakespear, a pas-

sage of greater poetical beauty than that in which Prospero describes the gradual return of reason in those who had been bewildered by his magic. How finely would it apply to the progress of light and knowledge succeeding an age of ignorance and superstition !

> The charm dissolves apace;
> And as the morning steals upon the night,
> Melting the darkness; so their rising senses
> Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle
> Their clearer reason.

A modest writer in Natural History or Natural Philosophy might adopt for his motto the reply of a soothsayer in Antony and Cleopatra, when questioned concerning his knowledge,

> In Nature's infinite book of secrecy
> A little I can read.

I once saw in an edition of Pope's works a line from Ovid happily prefixed in manuscript to the epistle of Eloisa to Abelard. It is taken from the Fasti, where the poet describes the conflagration of the temple of Vesta :

> Mistaque erat flammæ flamma profana piæ:
>
> Mixed with a holy flame, a flame profane.

The same hand, to a list of orders of knighthood had written, from Banquo's remark on the witches in Macbeth,

The earth has bubbles as the water hath,
And these are of them.

The cause of the ascent of an air-balloon might be very aptly expressed in the words which Ovid applies to the vapor that arose from the body of Memnon on the funeral pile, and was changed into birds :

Levitas sua præbuit alas.

Its lightness gave it wings :

and the aëronaut himself might appropriate the words of Perseus in the Metamorphosis, when descending at the court of Scythia from his aërial flight,

Veni nec puppe per undas,
Nec pede per terras : patuit mihi pervius æther.

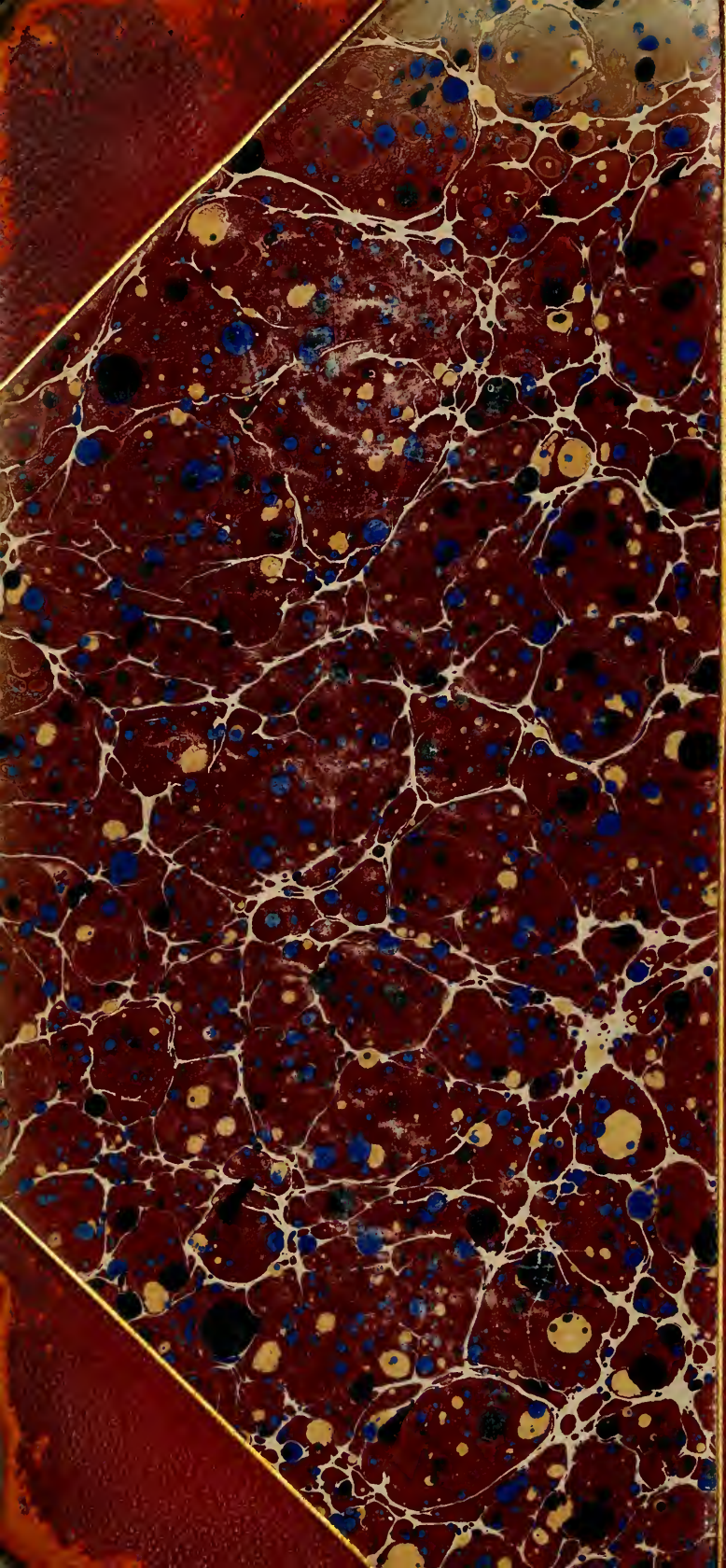
Nor cross the sea, nor o'er the land I came ;
My open path was through the yielding sky.

I am conscious that all these are only the trifles of literature ; but they are agreeable trifles, and afford no contemptible exercise for ingenuity ; while other things, equally trifling, only exercise industry. One of the most distinguished among modern literary societies was the French Academy of Inscriptions and Belles Lettres, the original object of which was to invent devices and suitable inscriptions for commemorating the glories of the reign of Louis XIV. The purpose was adulatory,

but the institution gave birth to many ingenious ideas. That the discovery and application of mottoes is no trivial task, may be inferred from the paltry quibbles that disgrace the arms of many of our nobility, and which may, indeed, prove the antiquity of their families, but indicate the taste of a barbarous age. I am not fond of suggesting new places, or I would propose that some ingenious scholar should be appointed *motto-master* to the Heralds' college. The many *parvenus* who would wish to wear their blushing honors with every graceful decoration, might provide a competent salary for such an office.

THE END.

Printed by Richard Taylor,
Shoe-lane, London.

University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
305 De Neve Drive - Parking Lot 17 • Box 951388
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90095-1388
Return this material to the library from which it was borrowed.

JAN 1 4 2008